

THE APPEAL
OF THE PICTURE



Look From Ridge

EMBARKING TOP OF ISLAND OF CYTHERA
— F. S. JONES —



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THE APPEAL OF THE PICTURE

AN EXAMINATION OF THE PRINCIPLES
IN PICTURE-MAKING

BY
FREDERICK COLIN TILNEY



WITH
MANY ILLUSTRATIONS
AND DIAGRAMS

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PREFACE

THE sub-title of this work may perhaps lead the reader to expect an exhaustive and scientific treatise of the whole range of æsthetic matters; but in view of the size of this modest volume he will be reassured if not disappointed. Its aim has been the quite simple one of putting in permanent form the thoughts and considerations which have exercised the writer during fifteen years of art-teaching and art-criticism. (And here might fittingly be stated his indebtedness to the Royal Photographic Society of Great Britain and Ireland for permission to use some passages from lectures prepared for and printed by them; and also to the proprietors of *The British Journal of Photography* and *The Liverpool Daily Post* for allowing him to quote himself at some length from their pages.) Apart from the general public, these critical and educational activities have been chiefly directed towards two entirely different classes of students. One, namely, the sanguine scholar of the art school; the other, the student of artistic or pictorial photography. The two types are so utterly opposed in temperament, habits, methods, and point of view, that together they afford the teacher an unusually wide range of experience from which to generalise. The pictorial photographer knows nothing of traditions. He seldom has been through the art-schools in his youth, but generally comes to art from the outside impelled by various motives. From the making of mere exposures he

strugglingly arrives at the making of artistic pictures by photography. He cannot draw but he comes occasionally to a full understanding. The section of the public that numbers him is a very small one, but its earnestness is amazing and its voracity for art-technicalities and "tips" is insatiable. By the force of his zeal and the amenability of his predilections the pictorial photographer often becomes a much better artist than many an art-student of the schools who has been pitchforked into his course of training, partly on the strength of some ill-judged childish attempt, and partly by the greed of the schools for scholars.

It is from both these classes that picture-makers come, and it is to both that this book is offered in the hope that its arguments will prove profitable. Should it come to the hands of the professional and experienced painter, he will possibly find little in its pages that he does not already know; but even to him there may be the advantage of seeing old ideas again presented and a few new ones tested by examination.

But beyond the artists who practise there are those who are content merely to love. To the amateur and collector these pages are none the less earnestly submitted. The amateur is faced with a mass of heterogeneous matter under the name of art which tries severely his taste and convictions. He is, in that respect, like the art-student who in his infancy is brought up on tradition, but spends his adolescence in trying to reconcile those traditions with the current art of the world. 'It is a mixed diet, from which only the fortunate few can extract health and strength. Finally there is that person who has been so conveniently called the man-in-the-street, to whom modern art is no longer

a thing to regard seriously. By him it is regarded as a thing altogether outside life: half a puzzle and half a great fraud.

This book has therefore been written with more than one end in view. Concurrently with technical expositions it offers explanations of the falling away of popular favour from the painted picture; and it forms an inquiry into the principles of the works that have enjoyed that favour in the past, addressing its conclusions to painters and picture-lovers with the object, distant though it may be, of regaining that favour.

The painter, the student, and the general amateur can, between them, do much to bring the greater public back to a real, honest, homely love of art; and they can work towards this end by trusting to their own intuitive perceptions and refusing to be drawn into the fashionable state of mental surrender before anything and everything that is presented to them in the name of art. By doing so they will encourage automatically every effort made in simplicity and sincerity to show the beauties of nature, as men know them; and they will at the same time stultify the efforts of those who would subvert the established principles of beauty which have for two thousand years made painting potent to uplift the world.

It has not been thought necessary to include reproductions of very well-known pictures which are, in these days, already hackneyed. Where such works are alluded to as examples or to support an argument, the mere reference has been deemed sufficient.

F. C. T.

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THE APPEAL OF THE PICTURE

I

INTRODUCTORY

Popular painting and painting for the expert—Leisurely conditions of old times more conducive to a love of art than the strenuous conditions of to-day—Art as the people's delight—Aloofness of modern painting—Originality—The student as copyist—The value of tradition—The discrediting of old work.

For whom are pictures painted: for the public or for painters? It will be found that the answer to this question has a distinct relation to methods of painting. Not that painters vary so widely in this matter as to permit a hard and fast line to be drawn between them. The alternative aims are probably always present in the mind of every picture maker; but the greater bias in either direction inevitably puts a seal upon the presentment and the style of the work.

It would appear upon a moment's thought that the painter using his talent as a means of earning his living, as any other professional man does, finds his obligation in offering the public something which it appreciates and desires; and that being so it would further appear that it is less to his advantage to work with his brother artists in mind than it is to think of the public his customers. (These considerations, be it understood, have nothing to do with bad work done with base commercial motives, but merely to the abstract question as to where the painter's obligations really lie.) The

natural conclusion is that in pleasing himself the painter is most likely to please his clients. That is true enough of some artists, but not of all; for it often happens that those who devote themselves to the pursuit of mere art-problems, however praiseworthy, are left without a *clientèle*, although they may win renown from a select circle of the initiated. Experience has proved that public success is denied to pioneers and experimenters unless or until their strivings have resulted in a positive achievement of some new truth or principle; and if that new achievement is of importance enough the public may be trusted to applaud.

The man who is painting for himself or for painters is doing laboratory work, and there is therefore little blame to the public should it fail to recognise as accomplished ends what are but the tentative means to those ends. Pictures are displayed to court criticism and win approval. They are concrete things made presumably to give pleasure. By this they must stand or fall. It is therefore quite fair to say that a picture that does not please, nor ever did, nor ever will, is a bad picture, however cleverly it may have been contrived and however much the artist may have honestly striven in it. There are, certainly, ways of pleasing open to severe censure, as when unworthy and decadent public ideas are deliberately pandered to; but these are included in the reservation of the parenthesis above.

Is then the case of the researchful experimenter a hopeless one? By no means; but it may be a pitiable one. He is on the same footing as the poet and musician, working really in abstract ideas, and, like them, powerless to do aught but attempt the formulation of those

ideas and present them for the public either to take or to reject. Poets and musicians and scientists too have been martyrs often enough to their cause; and in their ranks are numbered the experimental painters; but the painters who work with easy application of principles well confirmed and widely understood—the Rubenses, the Reynoldses, the Menzels—they are not martyrs; they are the favoured of fate.

It is admitted that there is equal work in life for both classes of painters, and that one is no more noble nor ignoble than the other. To take an analogy from the faculty of medicine we may say that the general practitioner is the equivalent of the man who paints to minister to the needs of his clients; whilst the experimentalist whose work is research and who makes no direct appeal to patients, he is the equivalent of the painter with a quest in his art, who works from impulses within him rather than from the incentive of a *clientèle*. The former class include Raphael, Rubens, Reynolds; the latter, Monet and Whistler. The giants in art are in both classes. They too are pioneers, but so powerful and so right that even as they break new ground they are acclaimed by the people—Rembrandt, Velasquez, Turner. It is characteristic of the two classes that the one finds honour during life; the other has it after death, when, as Bob Acres remarks, one could very well make shift to do without it. The giants have it both first and last.

Since it is impossible to speak of undiscovered things, it is obvious that all discourses upon painting can only relate to principles and practices already established. The scope of this little work is therefore necessarily

confined to that point of view of art which has for its object the making of pictures on accepted lines for the delight of the world. And perhaps this outlook has more to recommend it than at first appears.

Artists, whilst they lament the decline of public appreciation, do not fully consider the public point of view. In the old days which were without the present developments of science and their fascinating and exhilarating effect upon the public mind; and when books were as one then to a thousand to-day, people concerned themselves willingly enough with the fine arts and with poetry and music. Such things were an essential mark of culture and gentility. So late as the time of Reynolds these pursuits were necessary for filling the leisure and satisfying the mental appetites of intellectual people. Sir Joshua's studio was a crowded rendezvous for such folk. What artist's studio is so to-day? Whence could come the inception of a Dilettante Society now? Leisure is no longer a thing to be reckoned for: it does not exist. People are being claimed by too many other things beside the fine arts. Art has lost its hold of the public. Other factors of social life have become more alluring and absorbing. It is a lamentable fact that painting and poetry have been unable to develop so as to keep abreast with science. Music, on the contrary, has progressed. It has flourished in spite of electricity and petrol. It is still vigorous and as young as X-rays.

If it were required of us to find an explanatory theory for this state of things, we might hazard that the cause is to be found in the growing desire in the public mind for excitement. Life to-day is rapid and strenuous. Its pleasures must be stimulants, for its sensibilities are

jaded. Anything requiring a contemplative interlude for its proper assimilation is passed by in the headlong rush. Contemplation is a faculty lost to this generation. Rest, leisure, quiet, which were once a part of life, are now rare things, prescribed and tolerated as cures for the more and more frequent nervous breakdowns. But unfortunately calm and leisure are positively essential to the appreciation of the fine arts. The reason why music has kept abreast is seen in the development of the orchestra. Rest and calm are not expected in the concert-room and the theatre: excitement is taken for granted. Hence modern music succeeds because of its stirring orchestral effects and in spite of the fact that melody for its own sake has been left behind with earlier and more sedate epochs.

A natural reflection upon these facts would be that the fine arts also should have their orchestral excitement; and, as a matter of fact, this conclusion has been tried often enough. Sensations in art are only too common, but they seldom have more than an ephemeral success, and that only by much press-puffing. Since they rarely come as a logical development of things gone before, it is a fair surmise that curiosity rather than æsthetic sensibility revolves the turnstiles admitting to such things. Curiosity is not picture-loving, nor does it last long. The love of pictures must be better fostered than by such means or it will surely die. Perhaps it is not unreasonable to hope for a future advent of leisure and calm when the stress of life has culminated and a reaction sets in.

At any rate it is to the advantage of painters to keep art healthy and unsophisticated so that it may again become a nation's asset and a people's delight as it was

in the Netherlands during the seventeenth century, and in Belgium in the early nineteenth century when, as Richard Muther tells us, "that country had private collections by the hundred. Wealthy merchants rivalled one another for the pride of owning works by their celebrated painters." This is an ideal worth striving for. When the day arrives that every "man-in-the-street" is an eager connoisseur instead of a shy shrinker as he is to-day, then painters will have their rosy time again. Experiment and research are necessary to growth; but popular approval is necessary to life.

There is reason to believe that painting has grown pedantic and aloof. Young students especially have been anxious to be numbered amongst the aristocracy of art, and have fallen before the temptation of moulding their methods upon those of the pioneers and experimentalists, instead of being ingenuous and thus adding new charms to the sum total of art. Certainly many crimes have been committed in the names of Manet and Monet.

In a long period of years devoted to the struggles of students and amateurs, one's experience prompts one to speak with some conviction of art in the making. The chief result of such observations is that true originality is a rare growth in the field of art, and that when it is detected it is eradicated as a weed. Our system of education, which is one of example rather than precept, obsesses the student with notions of what is the expedient thing to do: it does not encourage him to ponder what might be done. The magnificence of South Kensington Museum spreads to all the schools, and its treasures are "authorities" to the student.

An instinct to look to them for inspiration is quite properly fostered in his mind; but there seems to be no safeguard against the degeneration of that inspiration into a hack-like habit of cribbing. Budding native ideas do not pass with the examiners, whose faith is pinned to ideas already prescribed. The student therefore who suspects or discovers that his ideas are unconventional remoulds them to fit the grooves that will run him to success and medals. First by choice and then by nature he becomes a copyist. When he leaves school he goes on copying. His visits to modern picture galleries, his conning of illustrated magazines, are undertaken in the quest of things to imitate. Success, he now finds, lies in the direction of the new thing, not the old. This change of objective makes no difference to him: he has learnt at school to adapt himself with ease. He therefore learns new fashions, smart tricks, and "original" ideas. He, too, will be "original" by imitation! To paint in the old-fashioned way is thought by the young painter to be a short cut to obscurity.

Until our methods of art education change—or better still, cease altogether—since art cannot be taught, and technique can be "picked up" by anybody who has the makings of an artist—it seems improbable that this parrot-like readiness to repeat "the latest" will ever wane. In these days the greedy painter who would be "up to date" finds more and more corrupting sustenance in the subversive ideas and examples which have become an accredited method of advertisement.

How can we best teach students to work upon impulses from within and not from without? How both inculcate and educe ideas of beauty and grandeur in men and things so that painting will appeal—nay, more

than that—will charm, move, and allure the greater public? These are the important questions for art pedagogues.

Not only do students, but mature painters and critics beside, believe that originality must take strange forms, and be unlike anything that has gone before. The term "original" is made to mean too much; it is often employed as a synonym for "startling." But the truth is that we are right in calling any man original who works solely from his own impulses and does not baldly repeat the ideas of others. When so high a premium is put upon the kind of originality that is only startling, it is not surprising that the forms and traditions of the art of the past are held to be effete and moribund. The doctrine is false and very harmful to young enthusiasts. It forces them to appraise too highly the latest fads, which they adopt to the ruin of their own individuality. He who can place himself upon an equal footing with the old masters and yet make a virile and lasting work of art has proved himself as great as they. This is a severer test of greatness, power, and original thought than is the rejection of time-proven principles. Turner knew this so well that he deliberately adopted the Claude tradition and set to work to surpass Claude himself, stipulating that the competition should be before men's eyes for ever. By his knowledge of nature and intuition in art he manifested the principles of this school of landscape more brilliantly than Claude himself had done. He did so by the agency of thought so advanced as still to be in the van to-day.

Artists are only justified in rejecting old traditions where such are proved to be wrong. And it is not easy to prove any of them wrong. Even where we can point

a finger of scorn at errors in early pictures it is less the principles than the artist's application of them that is at fault: for example, in some cases of misunderstood perspective, where a little halting of knowledge may play havoc with realism, the principle clearly displaying the painter's meaning nevertheless.

One of the few absolutely erroneous principles in past work is the violation of the unities of time and space by the inclusion in one picture of certain episodes that could not have happened together. But this principle became obsolete centuries ago.

It is misleading to hear that because art and observation have made great developments along certain lines that, therefore, what lies behind those developments is no longer tenable. The human mind is variable, accepting many views of the same thing according to clime, time, and temperament; and this variableness makes demands in every possible direction, so that art never really grows old or stale. In respect to this, Constable, though right in his practice, was narrow in his view when he shamed Beaumont's brown tree by his dark green one. That green one has since been competed against in turn by Corot's grey one and Peppercorn's black one.

Side by side with the most advanced ideas it frequently happens that those of old days stand firm and equally convincing. Proof of this is the multiplicity of styles accredited to-day. Were truth and beauty only found where the latest pioneers have pushed their researches, then all other painting would be discredited. It often is—by the pioneers! Because Corot's trees are good for being loose to the point of nebulosity, it does

not follow that Rousseau's are bad for being firmly defined. Truth is manifested in many apparently conflicting ways.

It is too often forgotten that the painters of old charmed their public possibly more than modern painters can charm to-day. In the matter of colour many old masters cannot now be excelled, in spite of modern advantages. Yet one has memories of critiques in the press that were condemnations of the old painting as being outworn, unfitted for modern ideas of life, and so forth. These little revolts seem to be due to a misconception of what art really is. The objections spring mostly from the subject-matter of pictures. Saints, classic heroes and divinities, as well as formal landscapes are thought to be subjects appealing only to persons who affect culture. We are given to understand that art is only a live thing when it depicts ironclad warships, motor-cars, crowded streets, effects of electric light, modern social conditions, sport and costume. Journalists who commit these shallow reflections to print must be unaware that mere subject-matter is not art, and that the æsthetic principles involved in the presentation of the most modern topics are identical with those employed by Mabuse and Masaccio.

Nobody will deny the possibility of founding new principles of æsthetics; but it is safe to say that the elemental and eternal ones already recognised are not likely to be largely added to. Their value would certainly not be affected by any number of new discoveries. If we could imagine somebody finding a new principle of line in, say, the spiral; its acceptance would not obscure the beauties of the circle. It is more than

likely that the old painters from first to last have appropriated all the principles that the science of æsthetics has been able to tabulate. If the placing of a head in a portrait was achieved with the subtlest nicety of spacing and balance by Vandyke, then everybody should admit that his arrangement cannot be bettered, however much it may be varied. Newness and freshness may result from modern fantasies on the subject here and there; but newness and freshness are not in themselves æsthetic principles; and obviously they cannot last.

II

THE POINT OF VIEW OF THE PUBLIC

The public unfairly blamed—Human experience the goal of art—Popular requirements in a picture—Favourite effects—The public as critic—The painter's relation to his public—Alienation of the layman—Types of critics.

THE apathy of the public mind towards art is traceable to more causes than those already touched upon. The artist is not only guilty of neglecting the public point of view: he sometimes allows himself to cater for the lower appetites of the populace. And this he finds an easy and profitable line to take, though in doing so he proves himself devoid of conscience. Such practices work harm to art because they bring about a kind of success for the least admirable aspects of art whilst they popularise certain phases which are an annoyance to persons having taste and judgment. In that way art becomes, in the eyes of the better people, confounded with things which are mundane and commercial. The fault here is distinctly with the artists.

"The Public" is a large and comprehensive term. It signifies everybody except the person using it. Perhaps no custom is more common than that which blames the Public, as a perverse and foolish entity, for everything bad in taste. The unfairness of such sweeping charges would have been resented centuries ago had the public not been an impersonal thing: a passive scapegoat which neither resents nor retaliates. But really the greater public is innocent as a lamb. All the perverseness and foolishness abides in certain sections of

it, and these are made up of exactly the individuals who commit the crimes for which they blame the general public. For worldly profit they invent and scheme ways of tickling the taste, the cupidity and the vanity of the greater public, and then, when taxed with these defections, they reply in the fine-sounding stereotyped phrase "The Public *will have it!*" One wonders then how the public managed to do so well without it before it was offered for sale. Having corrupted an indulgent greater public, these enterprising sections produce more and more on the strength of another empty phrase. They say they know "what the public wants." There is, of course, no genuine want at all for bad art, trumpery fancy goods, kaleidoscopic fashions, intoxicating liquors, or any other thing that is produced only to sell. Unfortunately the public will take anything that is showy, or sweet, or cheap, or all three. It is a child in these matters. But that fact does not exonerate the commercially-minded sections who exploit its childishness. We might give a child sweetmeats in excess and he would very readily eat them; but there is no question that bread is better for his nourishment physically and mentally. It is a case of the conscience of the feeder. The unwitting fed consumes more sweetstuff than bread: the commercially-minded feeder casts out his conscience and takes the larger order. For what reason, to take an example, are new and often ridiculous fashions offered day by day to the feminine community? Because by that means thrice as much clothing is sold as could be justified from the point of view of wear.

The same commercial impulse exists in the Fine Arts as in all other branches of civilised activity. The public is a tractable child, and has proclivities both upwards

and downwards. It is unfair of those who pander to the downward tendencies to blame it, when they themselves are really to blame for not encouraging the upward tendencies. In the name of Art a great mass of taste at a low level, as well as absolute bad taste, is offered to the world as being what the public wants. It is in reality only what the supplier wants the public to want. It ranges from sheer depravity up to the harmless "pot-boiler" picture. Because it always comes with an easy and indulgent appeal, pandering to what is obvious in sentiment, and requiring no effort of intelligence, the public takes it. It is likely that if these unconscionable commercial motives could somehow be stopped, a chastening of public taste would immediately set in, and a much larger proportion of people would concern themselves with matters of art to the greater social importance and financial prosperity of those matters in the long run.

In a world purged of depraved taste and keen to perceive sincere effort in art, the experimenters and pioneers would have a much better chance of early acceptance and success. But in the meantime those empirics must not expect the public always to keep up with them: they must needs wait until their demonstrated ideas have tardily sunk into the world's consciousness and become approved: a state of things much more readily brought about when the painting does not deliberately scorn popular conventions for the sake of sensation-mongering. New knowledge, new observation and new skill are all possible upon the lines lying within daily experience.

An eminent musician, Dr. H. Walford Davies, has said that the enjoyment of art is due to the power of associating ideas: that unless a listener or a spectator is

able to correlate what he receives with some emotions, or fancies, or facts in his own existence, the art performance will leave him cold. This is a most wise summing up, and goes to prove that the real goal of art lies hidden somewhere in human experience. Any attempts at art, therefore, that do not rise in the first place from the emotions of observations which make up human experience are doomed to failure because they have nothing in them which can be accepted by the lay mind. To-day such performances of *pseudo* art are all around us. They take the form of virtuosity. Sometimes they are skilful; sometimes not even that. But they are all alike in one respect: they are all inartistic.

The matter to be considered here is how best the public can be brought to take a living interest in works of art. The question is both profound and intricate. To the artist the public is at once a beneficent patron to be worthily served and a *bête noir* to be let alone. It will praise and it will blame, and may do both at the wrong time. Though undoubtedly much in need of enlightenment and education it is nevertheless a most apt pupil having limitless instincts and intuitions.

First and foremost among the qualities demanded by the popular mind stands truth. Unless truth in some manifestation or other is revealed the public is callous—untouched. What more salutary final criterion could exist on either side? Unfortunately the public is not always able to recognise truth at first sight. Sometimes the empirical painter catches truth in a new aspect or in a direction toward which the public has not hitherto turned. When this happens the truth is more than likely to be long overlooked, the public meanwhile

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denying its existence. For it likes to be able to give testimony at a glance, without the trouble of a studious scrutiny. It hails with joy certain obvious kinds of truth which its own knowledge can discern without dubious hesitation. This leads it to favour but a few ways, and those the most obvious, in which truth can be represented.

The most general of these presentments is a verisimilitude of material details; the more exhaustive and microscopic the better. Therein lies the cause of the immense popularity of the works of Meissonier and others working in his manner.

Another kind of truth readily welcomed is that of certain effects that in nature are so insistent and declamatory as to make an impression on the dullest hind without any effort of observation on his part. Such are the sinking sun, the moon at its brightest, and the sheen of either glinting in the water.

To minds a little higher in the scale, and showing the beginnings of personal observation, come such things as the gradation of colour in a sunset and the precision of reflected objects in still water. The lowest type of grocer's almanac or Christmas card will display these charms with constant success. Especially is mechanical gradation a safe card to play. One meets it everywhere as an unfailing resource of the lithographic cheap poster-printer.

Yet another phase of truth apparent to the uninitiated is that which concerns the passions and emotions. The pictures that have circulated most widely in the form of reproduction have been those wherein the characters reveal by action, gesture and facial expression, the feelings natural to the situations depicted. Those of

a humorous kind, representing ludicrous predicaments, are perhaps especial favourites. Such pictures touch answering chords in the minds of the people, who, by appealing to possibilities within themselves, can vouch for the accuracy of the emotions depicted. Admittedly this appeal to the elemental things in man's nature is not in itself fine art: it is humanism. Nevertheless, the same thing in a sublimer form is a necessary concomitant of the very finest art.

These predilections of the lowest public are, in reality, of the same nature as the higher approbation for which the artist sues—the altar-fire, lacking which the most strenuous efforts of art are but rejected sacrifices. All criticism is prompted by knowledge born of observation. It exists as a sliding scale: the more subtle the observation the keener the critical faculty. At its lowest degree that scale touches the broad base of popular pleasure in the obvious; and from that broad base there rises in decreasing extent the cone or pyramid of common judgment, strengthening in power and purity as it narrows in extent until the apex is reached, wherefrom the few, transcendent in enlightenment and perception—the Winckelmanns and Ruskins—look down and control even the painters themselves.

If this line of reasoning is justified it would seem to be beyond question that the artist's ultimate appeal must be to the public even though he be his own mentor in each separate effort. Unfortunately that fact does not seem to have come to the knowledge of painters, many of whom, especially the most talented and sincere, are strangely shy of the public in the abstract. To such the public is something dense, gross and hopeless, of

which only one individual here and there has brains or money enough to play the part of patron. In the hope of meeting those rare and visionary individuals the painter goes on painting—not to please the patron should he actually appear, but to impress his fellow artists with his power and brilliance. The patron, he conjectures, will take the cue from the praise of the critics.

The artist curls his lip in a lofty smile when he sees the public's predilection for sweet gradations of colour, reflections in water and flamboyant sunsets, for he regards these things as vulgarities. And so they are as generally represented by the inartistic for the inartistic. But no one will say that such effects are paltry in themselves. On the contrary they are the very greatest things in nature and art; proof of which is that their very power forces their effects into the consciousness of the dullest minds. Nor are the smiles and tears of home life less justifiably the chief concern of humanity, or the fears and wonders of myth and fairy tale. Although they are not in themselves art; they have inspired more art than anything else has. That the *genre* picture should make the broadest and most ready appeal is not only natural but excusable as indicating a healthy social condition.

If, therefore, there is anything wrong at all with the public it is in the matter of degree, not of kind; and when this is born in mind it becomes evident that the public is perhaps the greatest factor in the prosperity of art. Indeed there are many who would regard it as the *ne plus ultra* to which finally, if not immediately, all artistic effort is directed and all obligation due.

THE POINT OF VIEW OF THE PUBLIC 19

It will be found that there are many ways in which a work of art may impress an average intelligence. If a man walk into a room where pictures are hung upon the walls his glance will sweep over them and gather many ideas; and perhaps the leading idea will be of their various sizes. Should he approach one for particular examination the idea of its size will still underlie and be felt through further incoming impressions if the picture is either markedly large or small. The next insistent idea will probably be that of its tonal effect; and whether it is generally light or dark in relation to its surroundings. The next again will be of its colour perhaps, or of its "pattern," accordingly as one or the other of these attributes is the more demonstrative. All these things are noticed in a flash and almost unconsciously as the picture is approached.

When a more deliberate survey is commenced the most obvious technical qualities are first noted. Then comes the subject matter; how logically it is presented, and with what emotional force. After that follow further technicalities of a subtler and more elusive kind, and this is where the real business of judgment commences. If the man be something of an expert he will at this point leave the subject matter and consider the artistic aspects of the work; but if he be quite ignorant of technicalities he will, provided the work interests him, go on to identify himself with the matters depicted, and may become lost to all others. If the picture is a good one this absorption will do him good.

But suppose the picture is a very unconventional one; loosely drawn so as merely to suggest or roughly indicate the forms; or drawn in the manner of a child. Suppose its colours are unlike anything the man sees in nature.

Suppose further that the work is executed with some mannerism of touch which is meaningless to him, although possibly the artist and his friends may see the meaning of it. What impressions in that case are made upon the spectator? Long before he arrives at the point of subject matter he is puzzled. In view of all his own memories of the appearance of things this picture is strange and unreal. He is faced with the alternatives that either he himself or the artist is a fool. Perhaps he remembers a flattering press notice of this very work. If he does he will doubtless think himself lost, and the artist saved. Should he happen to be in a public gallery he may overhear other opinions extending the confusion of his own mind. There is nothing here that will do him any good. All that is here is the earliest symptom of that feud between fine art and the people which is a most regrettable and portentous sign of the times.

It ought never to be possible for a person to exclaim, as we often hear:—"O, I know nothing about art!" Such an expression has the formula of modesty, but in reality there is little modesty in the case. When we hear a person of intelligence and education make the admission we may be sure that it signifies a confession not of ignorance, but of bewilderment. The speaker is in reality washing his hands of a disputatious affair. His attitude is due to a resentment of all those bickerings arising from the different points of view held by artists and critics, which embarrass his own strivings to know what he ought to admire. He shrinks from forming any opinion of his own where doctors disagree, or where they unite in making him feel an ignoramus.

The probable outcome is that such a man detaches himself from art, and is rather disposed to regard it as an immense machinery of humbug. It is the position taken up by hundreds of thousands of level-headed men whose judgments in the ordinary affairs of life are efficient and sought after; and who should, in a better state of things, be numbered amongst the supporters and patrons of art.

The question is forced upon us as to whether the artists have not themselves to blame: whether they have not, by pushing their sophistications over the border-line, and by displaying for public approval their immature progress along certain lines of empirical technique, brought about this alienation of their potential supporters.

Besides this man of average intelligence there are, of course, other typical spectators. There is the absolutely uninitiated person. He too has a point of view in regarding pictures, though perhaps it has not much concern with the picture-maker. It certainly has not if the person is on the artistic level of Good Queen Bess (or was it some other worthy?) who complained of the shadows in her portrait on the ground that there were no dirty marks on her own face. Such unenlightenment is rare in these days; but if it does exist the sufferers must be left to climb up to a better outlook if they can.

Even amongst those who can understand a picture there is a point below which it is unreasonable to go when seeking all legitimate points of view. Those who are below that point have an undoubted right to an opinion, and they are after all of the stuff that lovers of

art are made of; but their undeveloped views do not count for enough in a consideration as to what constitutes a fine picture. They are too near the base of the critical cone. The judgment of such persons, though it may be right as far as it goes, is nevertheless quite deficient so long as it is only able to take cognizance of a few factors in a work of art and not of all. It invariably happens that the appreciated factors are sentiment and narrative in the literary motive of the work, unless perchance a thought is given to colour, in which case the standards when there are any, will probably approach very nearly to the pure and barbaric; and when there are none the colour-sense is likely to prove itself derived from the usages of fashion and the common-places of environment.

Yet it will be found that the class of recipient to whom these factors are all in all possesses inexhaustible enthusiasm as well as keen and correct judgment. This is scarcely surprising because sentiment, curiosity, and wonderment lie within the jurisdiction of the instincts, being largely affairs of the heart. It is in the affairs of the head; in matters that address themselves to the hereditary faculties and to æsthetic sensitiveness educated by training that these honest critics fail.

At the opposite pole is the hyper-technical person who purposely shuts his mind against all considerations of subject matter, and who, in his well-intentioned anxiety to keep free from all literary associations and emotional distractions, follows, though too blindly, a gospel of art for art's sake, praising or condemning a picture upon nothing else than the elusive subtleties of technique which the man at the other end of the scale

cannot see at all. One delights in the very things, that the other considers inimical to art pure and simple. In the middle there is wisdom.

There is a common ground upon which the two extremes may meet if they will, and that is the ground of truth. For the art that is truthful, however abnormal its execution, can be repudiated by neither. The first step to this unity would be the broadening of each party's ideas as to what truth really is: broadening to the extent of considerably overlapping. The more overlapping, the more unity. Unfortunately there is a reverse tendency to-day. The variant views have a widening gulf between them. The layman in his materialistic outlook upon life demands more and more precisely the appearance of things as life has taught him to expect them (the wordy enthusiasms in public picture galleries being for the most part mere etiquette of a social function, and therefore a negligible fact) whilst the expert favours more and more the unnaturalistic picture.

The painter who is half scientist tries by various mechanical resources to imitate the effect upon the retina of the decomposition of light by breaking up his pigments into minute patches of colour, which are, however, widely different from those of the spectrum. What he achieves is an optical sensation resembling the vibratory and iridescent conditions of vision which the layman only very occasionally meets with and then considers embarrassing. A further fact is that these effects are necessarily gained at the expense of firmness of contour, so that drawing as Holbein and Dürer knew it is impossible. Here a door is opened for the incompetent draughtsman, who may be quite clever at

coloured dots. The layman resents the loss of form and moreover has suspicions of the incompetent one who is upon the seats of the mighty. Hence the further widening of the gulf.

The layman has been educated throughout the ages in the language of the great masters. Is it not a little unreasonable to turn him out of school with the intimation that he has hitherto been wrongly taught? His case is complicated by observing that all painters do not adopt the new methods. Some pursue an opposite path and instead of seeing rainbows everywhere appear to see only two or three sombre tints. Whilst some lose all form others are so jealous of their contours as to surround them with a very demonstrative outline. Since, then, one painter sees so much more, and another so much less than his own eyes see, he has something like an argument in the midway ordinary vision of the man who looks about to enjoy himself, but has not been taught to look at things as though they were already pictures. It is by the truth that lives in the normal that men must attune themselves for a harmonious existence.

We may admit that the uninitiated layman has queer little peeps of the large truth; but since the experimental painter has thrown over about as much as the other lacks, what remains to the painter is also a queer little peep of the *large* truth—which is the truth apparent to the largest number of average intelligences.

There is room for technical development in a direction approaching the public standpoint as well as away from it. At present the majority of painters have their backs turned upon it in their desire to press forward.

Their studies take them further and further away from subject-matter. The advanced painter endeavours to represent light and forgets the beauty of the earth under the glorification of light. The figure-painters make clever studies of people in all kinds of effects; but few paint life and the emotions. It is unquestionably necessary that the lay mind should be weaned away from mere anecdote, but it need not be fed solely upon models and lay-figures, back views and faces wherein the features are either liquescent, lumpy, or non-existent. The Dutch people of the seventeenth century were treated better by their painters, and repaid the courtesy with substantial appreciation. Light effects were popular enough when De Hoogh did them, and the men and women of Rembrandt and his fellow workers were more than mere "figures." Our own Wilkie won his public by similar means and Millet has shown that modern ideas in art are not incompatible with life and its common truths.

III

SUBJECT-MATTER

Literary and æsthetic motives—Hogarth, Wilkie and Frith—"The Fighting Téméraire"—Didactic work of Watts—Ascetic flesh-painting of Rossetti—"The Bride"—"Hope"—Sentiment of Landseer—Charles Sims—Modern subject-matter of "The Fountain"—The claims of beauty and joy—Art-asceticism and ugliness.

THE question of literary motive or art for art's sake is one of the most awkward that beset pictorial art. It cannot be shirked, but demands profound and unbiassed consideration. So far we have but looked at it as affecting the point of view of the observer, but its most difficult aspects are seen where the attitude of the painter is concerned.

Whilst it is not possible to regard sentiment, morality and tale-telling as anything to do with art *per se*, the fact remains that some of the greatest pictures the world has ever seen undoubtedly owe much to those very matters. Perhaps the question may be summed up in this way:—A fine picture may be, and often is, independent of emotionalism and narrative; but a *great* picture can never be independent of art pure and simple. Judged as a work of art it must stand or fall entirely by its technical worth: judged as a picture it may, at the same time, introduce from without, the alien qualities of anecdote and morality. In what degree these adventitious factors may be resorted to, and whether or not they are inimical to the æsthetic qualities are questions which can only be settled on their own particular

merits and as they arise. The certainty is that a picture can no more be carried to a lasting and universal success by either literary motive or æsthetic motive alone than a boat can be propelled by one oar of a pair.

There are three names in British art that stand out pre-eminently as belonging to work where the literary motive is in excess. These are Hogarth, Wilkie, and Frith. Of these the greatest artist was undoubtedly Hogarth. It is only necessary to look at his sketch of "The Shrimp Girl" in the National Gallery to realise that he understood perfectly and could practise with ease the most modern principles. The synthetical view, elimination of unessentials, bravura, verve, movement, animation—all are in this masterly sketch. Hogarth's portraits and interiors with groups prove him to have been a sound and accomplished painter as well as a marvellous student of character.

But there was another side to his genius, and that was satire. His artistic gifts, in the use of which he delighted, were seldom employed for themselves alone. Though a theorist and an authority upon art matters as well as a sound technician in practice, his gifts were mainly a medium for certain other faculties moral and intellectual. Hogarth looked out upon life, saw its absurdities and misadjustments, and having seen them he portrayed them. The characters in his scenes were caricatures, and even his portraits were so full of character as, in some cases, barely to miss being caricatures also. This forcefulness went to the hearts of his public. Hogarth was a giant in humour. The fact that his engraved and painted sequences were designed to lay bare weaknesses, immoralities, and anomalies does



THE ENRAGED MUSICIAN

A typical example of Hogarth's satire

not prove that Hogarth was a preacher. His public would not have tolerated that. He was a laugher. He did not exhort; he exposed, and that with a rare relish.

The point is that had Hogarth not been so well received as a humorous social reformer he might, by spending less time with satire, have further developed his artistic powers and become a greater painter than he was.

Wilkie was 'also a very gifted painter, but his tale-telling ran on different lines. He laughed *with* his fellow men, not *at* them. That was a less exacting mission in life and left his energies more free to concen-

trate on art than did Hogarth's virile subject-matter. Wilkie was perhaps less great as a painter. The narrative of either is equally absorbing; but the motives of Wilkie are sweet and lyric where Hogarth's are strong and epic. Possibly such plain speaking as appears in the engraved sequences would have been barred in the better-behaved days of Wilkie, who delighted his public mostly by the portrayal of the comforts and joys of village life and with only a mere sprinkling of venial faults to supply a spice of humour. The finest examples of his painting rise to a high technical level carrying on the best traditions of Ostade and Teniers. The opposing weight of literary and æsthetic motives are so nicely balanced in Wilkie's early *genre* work that neither claims more than its share of the observer's attention.

In Frith we see a strong realism of the most obvious aspects of things, and an exacting eye for detail: often the kind of detail that adds nothing to the force of the appeal. Frith further possessed in a great degree the power to seize a convincing expression on the faces of his characters. In "The Railway Station" perhaps, this faculty reaches its highest point.

Although we may concede that Frith, in these matters, was a great artist yet his rank is not high among painters. The designing of expansive scenes involved him in smallness of line. Compared with the composition of another expansive scene, given here as frontispiece, Watteau's "Embarking for Cythera" (Louvre) his "Derby Day" (Tate Gallery) has the look of a haphazard and not particularly happy photograph. The subtle delights of airiness and mystery, of interplay of light and shade did not come within his province. To

have concerned himself with these things would have been to discount the absolute realism of ordinary affairs, and it was by this absolute and material realism that he sought to convince his public. And in this he succeeded. Judged by his own standards he was a brilliant success. In comparison with his crowded scenes, made out to a hair, and garish with the ordinary light of day, the realism of Wilkie was old-fashioned convention. But Wilkie is treasured still whilst Frith's exactness seems of little value to us. His histrionic force alone captivates to-day.

Frith's technical claims rest upon a facility for laying on paint in such a manner that it is not aggressive as paint, whilst wonderfully realising the forms and textures of things. His faces are all clever miniatures, and his pictures are agglomerations of miniatures. Of æsthetic allurements his canvases are barren. Like Hogarth he held the mirror up to nature, but the exposure was less scathing and the means less masterly. Frith was content to show men the peccadilloes and sentimental troubles that come willy-nilly in a normal existence.

In our argument he offers an example of the kind of picture-making that liberally supplies the literary interest and is all but devoid of the æsthetic. Frith is therefore not an ideal; but he is a pattern in one respect, since he gave painting which the public could understand—an early but an indispensable step in the development of public taste.

It is a significant fact that the moral or religious picture of recent times is usually the least rich in artistic worth. In Victorian days there used to be a

very popular engraving or lithograph called the "Rock of Ages." It depicted a damsel in a white robe clinging to a stone cross, her feet buffeted by the waves of the sea, and was presumably an allegory. But the work was not prompted by any artistic impulse. The conditions of the time were favourable to the production of this the most extreme example of its kind; but they were nevertheless very different from the conditions of the time of Raphael although the immediate motive of an old Italian altar-piece was precisely the same as that of the "Rock of Ages," namely to excite the susceptibilities of potentially religious persons. In Raphael's time the best artists available were pressed into the service of the church. Although they worked "to order" their works were accomplished by means of their own æsthetic impulses which never allowed the claims of subject-matter to stultify those of art.

If search were made of all our pictures galleries for the work of art winning the greatest number of admirers it would probably be found that Turner's "Fighting Téméraire" (National Gallery) would stand as high as any. Before its charms intellectual, sensuous and emotional all admirers meet on common ground. The artist born and trained bows before the technical mastery which has secured its sensuous charms and the intelligent spectator without technical knowledge is at once impressed by the dignity, solemnity, beauty, and pathos of its subject. To an Englishman loving the sea and proud of his country's traditions upon the sea, the calm demeanour of the famous ship is deeply touching. She follows helplessly the fussy tug, not by her own motive power but dragged by a cable; an indignity which she

seems to bear with the majestic resignation that kings and queens have shown when led by a menial to execution. In keeping with this feeling the waters are still, as though attentive and reverent. The clouds form up in deferent ranks to see her pass. The sun himself seems to pause on the point of departure to see her, upon whom he has so often shone, move on to her destruction. The whole picture is a funeral ode, a pæan of regretful homage. Turner was impressed by the melancholy grandeur of the episode when he actually viewed it from a passing steamer. Never were impressions more fully reproduced: seldom has there been more eloquent painting. It is a case where technique pays homage to subject.

But the treasures of art contain many such masterpieces possessing a literary interest thus closely interwoven with the technical. The great advantage possessed by this dual interest consists of the fact that the subject first awakens a latent emotion in men; which lasts while the sensuous susceptibilities of the spectator grow, being actuated by the æsthetic beauties of the work. In the end the æsthetic interest is strong enough in the spectator to satisfy him without the aid of subject-matter. He is then upon the footing where stand the connoisseurs. This is art's "self-educating" method.

Turner's subjects were invariably dignified and elevating. He was a poet who sang of nature even when dealing with ships and buildings or mythological personages. When he dealt with human figures it was to use them as pictorial accessories, and therefore his art

rose above the taint of sentiment or moralising; although strangely enough he himself was, as a man, highly sentimental.

This lofty choice of subject-matter in all but a few works of Turner, gives them almost a superhuman rank. Before them one feels the impossibility of anything trivial in the motive. Add to this the sensuous appeal of the colour and romance, and the result is a style of work which must become more and more a people's art. It is not likely to pall or grow antiquated because sincerity has gone to the making of it. Sincerity makes things immortal. Shams that men grow to understand the trick of, they leave aside in disillusion and disappointment. Such are the insincere "goods" of advertising artists.

The work of Watts is, like Turner's, ennobling; but in a different way. Much of it is didactic. A man of the most exemplary views upon ethics, and of the purest motives in his art, Watts often elected to paint stern moral lessons for the spiritual guidance of those who looked upon his pictures. Though he was gifted with unusual powers and approached more nearly than anybody in his century to the transcendent style of the great masters; though his feeling for grace of line, majesty of mass, and richness of colour called all the art-world to his feet; nevertheless there came a time when he seemed deliberately to eliminate all the sensuous charms from his work, maintaining only an oracular dignity in his compositions. His public, finding his subjects more and more enigmatical and his execution more and more ascetic, have largely turned away from

those very works which the preacher-painter would have had them most attentively contemplate.

Rossetti took the same course. In adopting deliberately a highly ascetic style in dealing with the figure, he turned away many a would-be devotee. In the richness of colouring and wealth of idea, and in the mediæval splendour his pictures presented, it was hard to find a reason for the ashy-green flesh colour he so inconsistently introduced. His own explanation was that he wished to divert merely animal admiration and to induce a mystic and ascetic attitude in his beholders. No doubt he succeeded. But in the pictures where he put no such curb upon the healthy emotions, such as "The Bride," where the complexions of the women are robustly beautiful, he has won his widest public, and that for the longest time. Rossetti himself was a perfectly rational admirer of the charms of healthy flesh.

The most popular work by Watts is his "Hope" (Tate Gallery); and who would deny that in almost every other respect it is his best? Here there is a distinct and touching idea, presented without mawkishness, but with a pathos that finds a ready echo in the minds of the people. "Hope" is a parable easily read; and the better it is understood the more does the picture gain. It is neither a sermon nor a moral lesson; it is but a poem upon a theme near to the hearts of all. From the point of view of subject it resembles "The Fighting Téméraire" in keeping a perfect balance between theme and execution.

The efficacy of the pictures of the early church lay in the fact that they offered little or no actual and direct sermonising: they relied rather upon touching men's emotions through the senses.

Numerous instances could be adduced wherein subject-matter goes too far, but one will suffice. It has often been noted, with truth, that the pictures of Landseer, although highly esteemed, owe their popularity mainly to certain susceptibilities found chiefly among lovers of animals. In giving to his dogs, deer, etc., the griefs and sorrows that men themselves experience; and by depicting these in expressions of countenance all but human, the painter did not enhance his reputation as an artist, although by those means he gained a world-wide reputation as a picture-maker. As an artist he is seen to unqualified advantage in his workmanlike studies of animals done more for himself than for the public; but his subject-pictures were in latter days dragged down to the level of the grocer's wall-almanac—not because they deserved no better fate, but because their emotional appeal overweighted them and sank them to that level. Their author possibly could have had no objection to his works thus giving pleasure to countless uninitiated people: that is a grand mission after all; but he certainly was not counting upon a grocer's almanac popularity when he submitted his works to the art world.

The instance is a proof of the readiness of mankind to be interested in any work of art that deals with the joys and sorrows of life. These and other emotions as depicted by Landseer were understood and enjoyed in spite of the fact that they were exemplified by dumb animals in ways characteristic of human creatures. Landseer's animals act human parts in most cases, and he intended that they should in such examples as "High Life and Low Life" (Tate Gallery), "Dignity and Impudence" (National Gallery) and many others that will occur to the mind. In one version of "Low Life"

(S. Kensington) he went as far as representing a dog having a bleary, half-closed eye, and smoking a short clay pipe. Certainly in humorous art the dumb creation may masquerade as men with impunity; but the works of the great animal painter were not invariably in the comic strain which carries such impunity, and therein lies the little taint. Moreover works which incline to lightness of subject are better when treated in a light method. A complete and highly-finished oil-painting of moderately large dimensions is too cumbersome a medium for the illustration of a little joke. A drawing by Charles Keene would be almost intolerable carried so far. Landseer won his public; but in doing so he missed the pure sincerity of aim which would have lifted all this section of his work to the still higher level of his "Sleeping Bloodhound." (National Gallery)

The picture by Charles Sims, A.R.A., called "The Fountain" which is now in the Tate Gallery, may be instanced as an example of art for art's sake. Painters admire this work because of its beauty of handling and its quality; but it has charms beyond. Its design is novel, although it has much of the grand manner of tradition. Even the uninitiated are attracted by its striking subject-matter, promising so much but yielding so little to scrutiny. In fact nobody can tell what it is all about, and it is to be doubted whether the artist himself could throw much light on the point. It is a painter's picture of great fascination but a little more thought on the painter's part to come at a rational subject would have opened the door to world-wide enjoyment by the "Hope" and "Téméraire" public.

The true artistic motive is beauty. In pictures that are not of the ephemeral kind, beauty must stand before fun, or sentiment, or moralising. In modern work it has oftentimes been difficult to detect the beauties of a picture beneath the altruism which has buried it. Men who paint "with a purpose" come very near burying beauty. Battle painters often do. There seems to have been at times a deliberate attempt to make the horrors of war and the horrors of toil repellent. When sordid sweating peasants are depicted—types of toil-worn martyrs, made ugly by the life they lead—the subject is on the border-land between æsthetic and altruistic motive. Lepage's subjects were occasionally on this border-land, and a few of Millet's were.

Painting is out of its legitimate sphere as art, when it is propagating social and altruistic ideas at the expense of beauty; and the artist's real motive is easily detected by the presence or absence of æsthetic qualities.

The old Dutch painters revelled in homely figures: boors and tavern-idlers, unprepossessing enough at times, but always happy. The lowness of their conditions never made a bid for the spectator's pity. On the contrary the artists presented their types as entertaining characters, at whose merry pastimes they would have us laugh. The peasant of modern painting however, is frequently an unlovely creature, destitute of humour and steeped in sadness. When such a subject is also devoid of æsthetic charm it is no longer fulfilling the function of art, which is to give pleasure, however well it may be painted. Under such conditions it is nothing but a homily, and from the point of view

of subject-matter, differs in nothing from the howling Madonnas and Magdalens of the early German school.

In other branches of art, particularly landscape, modern painting has admitted more and more the picture in which the artist alone can take any pleasure and that only for technical reasons. The public rightly regards these works as representations, clever perhaps, of ugly spots and commonplace things, not made beautiful by any passing natural effect, but in their bareness and lack of redeeming features. The motive for such works is found only in the virtuosity of the painter and a certain art-asceticism. Sometimes these paintings have a literal truth which commands respect for the execution if for nothing else.

But there is even a worse condition of things to be seen in our galleries, namely a deliberate purpose to make things ugly which are not necessarily so in themselves—even faces, of all things! And these are, in most cases, not done in an accomplished manner, but in accordance with the decadent tricks of one or two *coteries*. How is it possible that ordinary folk can feel any attractions towards the galleries which display these things?

IV

SIZE AS A FACTOR

The relation of size to the medium employed—The Scale—Meissonier—Van Heyden—Dutch cabinet-pictures—The painter's view-point—Foreground objects—Piranesi.

REFERENCE has been made to the number of ways in which a picture may strike a spectator, and it was found that perhaps the first impression was that of its size.

Upon the face of it it is difficult to see why the abstract qualities that make up art should be more forcible in a picture six feet square than in one six inches square. One is disposed to argue that since æsthetic qualities are abstract matters mere size can have no bearing upon them. Beyond that, one is faced with the fact that a great number of very large pictures are poor ones and the majority of really masterly works happen to be comparatively small.

When all this is admitted there are, nevertheless, a few factors remaining to be taken into account. Supposing two works to be identical in subject and treatment, but one very small and the other very large, there can be no doubt that whilst the larger one will be imposing the small one will call up quite different emotions. The latter will affect the mind somewhat as all *petit* objects do. A thing that is tiny is invariably regarded as a toy when it belongs to a class of things that are usually larger. A small-scale model of the most terrible engine of destruction can never look

imposing. If it be neatly made and finished it must necessarily be regarded as pretty. Small works of art are often spoken of as gems; a term which would have no application to a large work.

It is probably due to these differing ideas evoked by the variance of size that pictures dealing with light, pleasing subjects usually incline to smallness, and those of historical, commemorative or didactic strain have larger proportions.

Apart from these matters of subject the choice between sizes is no doubt dominated by considerations of convenience and housing-room. But in the case of pictures hanging in a public gallery where liberal space is provided no such extraneous considerations can enter. It will then be found that the larger picture has the advantage.

That advantage arises from more than one set of causes. In the first place all minds respect bigness as bigness. The respect may be qualified, modified, even in some cases negatived; but it is there nevertheless. The high mountain, the tall tree, the wide expanse, the great building, the colossal statue; whatever the object may be, beautiful or ugly, it commands interest and respect.

In the case of a picture there are further factors. A picture is made up of certain "fields" or patches of colour or tone of varying extent. The expansiveness of a patch of clear blue sky, for example, or a stretch of earth or sea, or a mass of flowers, may have been planned for a particular reason. Its breadth of effect is calculated to dominate the spectator's impressions. The larger it is the more it must do so. But should the confines of the work restrict such a passage to a

comparatively small area the expansiveness is less marked and requires enforcing by further contrast of parts. It is for this reason that reduced reproductions of certain pictures lose the fulness of their effect in spite of an accurately preserved relation of parts. Masses of tone and colour that make their proper effect upon the mood of a spectator in a fairly large work may be belittled by reduction until the tone pattern looks fretted and the colour patches become kaleidoscopic. The effect upon the spectator by the expansive passage as intended by the artist becomes impossible for want of actual area. One finds an extreme example of this fact in photographs, which are usually too small to rise to any considerable pictorial significance; but which when enlarged to twenty times their original size may become effective and eloquent. Similarly in small autochrome transparencies the colour is small to the point of minute spottiness in some cases; whilst a larger plate giving an image four times the size admits masses of colour wide enough to impress the retina to some psychological purpose.

This defect in small pictures is not present when the artist so schemes his composition that the various parts of his design shall by enforced contrast in size create the desired effect. Such a small work will look "big" in style, because its idea is amply expressed, the large and the small showing side by side in evident purpose. A large work, on the other hand, if treated in this way would probably appear to possess empty spaces.

The question of scale offers resources here. A large scale in a little picture will of course obviate littleness of effect; but if the scale be disproportionately great

the pictorial possibilities are restricted, and pictures are apt to look like pieces cut out of larger ones, as when a head is painted at life size upon a canvas that will only just hold it.

It is possible to keep the forms large in design and spacious in feeling whilst adopting a scale suitable to the dimensions of a small work. Corot did this with perfect success.

If the scale be too small the spectator will take too close a standpoint. On the other hand it is not reasonable to expect him to back far away from a small picture, which he would have to do if the scale were very great.

Scale and size ought to have proper relation one to another so that the whole design may be viewed synthetically from a point where all the other qualities are apparent to the eye. One cannot look at Frith's "Derby Day" as a whole, because the scale is small and the interest at the same time absorbing, so that although the picture is a large one the visitor has to place his eye fairly close and study the work piecemeal. To most pictures this would be damaging.

And now enters another consideration and one which is instrumental in settling all others. This is a consideration of the medium in which the picture is worked.

Different mediums demand different methods of approach. The water-colour in its best style depends upon broad flowing washes put upon the paper with directness. But the limpidity of the pigment entails so much dexterity and alertness in its management that a very large surface is generally beyond the control of any but exceptionally skilful specialists in the art.

This, as well as the limits in size of drawing papers, has much to do with the fact that dimensions which are considered large for water-colours are by no means large for oil-paintings. The former are also by their nature more fitted for a smaller size and a lighter treatment. When they emulate the size, power, and solidity of the latter they do so only by way of a *tour de force*.

Oil painting, on the other hand, lends itself to execution by large brushes, and the pigment spreads and covers without any need of special skill, since it stays as it is placed; all of which is conducive to a broader method of work upon a more spacious support.

Although there is practically no limit to the size to which an oil-painting can go, it is of course possible to work with good effect also in miniature with oil-colours; because the medium permits it. There are, in oil, Dutch masterpieces in minuteness as well as Italian and Flemish masterpieces in colossal dimensions.

The point is that there seems no wisdom in joining up sheets of paper in order to do large works in water-colour because the medium, in its best use, does not permit it. Within the limits of expediency in all matters it would seem advisable to work as large as convenient in any medium, so that the picture may have the advantage of an imposing air, whilst its message gains full scope for impressing those who behold it.

The later works of Watts could not have been done in the size and scale of Meissonier and yet have kept the force of their serious import. And it is equally obvious that although Meissonier's pictures are too mundane in subject to warrant the scale of Watts, yet were they larger they would possess many qualities they now

lack. Some of these come into evidence even when optical slides of the works are projected by the lantern on to a screen. Meissonier adopted a small scale, we are given to understand, in order that his pictures might attract attention among all the large canvases that were fashionable when he began to exhibit. His motive was therefore merely one of expediency, and had no foundation in æsthetics.

The painter who worked most successfully in a minute manner was perhaps the Dutchman Van Heyden. Broad and simple as his works are in actual effect in spite of their minuteness, they give almost an uneasy feeling to the spectator who thinks of the laborious exactness and the dull patience necessary to their accomplishment. The works now in the Wallace Collection may be referred to as examples of this laboriousness which perhaps affects the spectator more than it did the painter himself, since there seems no sign of anything but calm content on his part to carry out to the uttermost limit his interminable task of painting the mortar-joints between bricks, with little hair-strokes of the brush.

It must not be forgotten that such pictures were never intended for exhibition in a picture gallery aflood with light and expansive in area. They were painted for the rooms of cultivated and enthusiastic burghers. The houses in Dutch towns were, as we may gather from the pictures of their interiors, seldom broadly and fully illuminated. In spite of large windows, we see that the lighting of the chambers was concentrated upon a small area of one or two walls, and that dark spaces and corners abounded. A choice picture would hang upon a wall where the light would fall

upon it almost in a shaft. This would render its detail very brightly and clearly, and its happy possessor would be able to view it either in its broad aspect as he sat apart from it, or in its detail to the utmost advantage when he chose to stand near it for that purpose. The look of Dutch work of this description in a public picture-gallery is not faithful to the artists' intention.

Dutch art was essentially an art of cabinet pictures: precious gems enshrined in chambers or "cabinets" where their affluent owners treasured their antiques, their costly furniture and fabrics and their plate. Pictures then were loved for their own sake: they were not regarded as customary wall-furniture.

Before leaving the subject of scale there is a matter which seems to be in a measure related and which may be discussed at this point.

There are two ways of conceiving the presentment in a picture. One is to scheme for a near view, and the other, for a more distant view in arranging the *mise en scène*. The difference between these alternatives is, that in the one case the scale will be the more varied, and in the other it will be more nearly the same at all parts. The former will result in the most pictorial conditions, and naturally enough, is almost always that adopted for landscape subjects.

The close point of view implies foreground objects at a large scale. The view without an important foreground object lacks the stimulation afforded by a contrast of scales. Corot said that he found all his foregrounds in the middle distance. True though that may have been, they do not thus appear in his pictures. His plan amounted to finding his subject, scheming it

for his canvas and then retiring from it to paint it. His near masses are always large in size and scale in relation to the dimensions of the canvas.

Cecil Lawson painted a scene on the river, and finding it tame he added sparsely-clothed tree stems across it in the foreground from top to bottom, knowing that an extra plane thus gained as well as an enforced contrast of scale would make doubly precious the real subject which was in the middle distance.

One of the most daring masters of this resource was Piranesi the etcher who, in his views of Rome, placed enormous buildings within a few paces of the picture edge. It is a method for a lesser artist to admire but perhaps not to make a practice of imitating. There is no doubt an added grandeur in a work having a near object of imposing dimensions and others diminishing rapidly in scale as they recede into the distance.

Only one condition is essential, and that is that the near object shall be neither ugly nor trivial. If it is either of these things it stands confessed as a mere part of the pictorial machinery without higher claims. Lawson's trees only just escape the charge of being supernumeraries in the scene, whereas the foreground objects of Piranesi are usually the actual subject of the work, with a distance to afford embellishment. That, of course, is the other extreme.

It seems safe to say that the object should be of interest enough to anchor observation, so to speak. It should insist upon the intimacy with the spectator which its near position sets up. A large foreground object is, in its psychological import, like a voice at one's ear; and that is a more moving thing than a remote voice however loud. Just as a voice at one's

ear will be intolerable if it jar upon us, and delight us if it have charm as well as a pleasing message, so a near object that is ugly will be the more intolerable the larger it is.

In the case of a small near object we see that the attention not being so well held, becomes dissipated. This is a state of things only happy when the design is of a frankly decorative nature, for that style of work requires that the eye should wander all over the field. The "all-overishness" that is a characteristic of good modern wall painting, is exemplified to advantage in the work of Puvis de Chavannes.

V

TONE AS A FACTOR

Light and dark keys—Morland's "Stable"—Emotional and intellectual truth—The "dark" and the "light" painters—The human iris and the photograph—Forced effects—Zurbaran's "Franciscan Monk" and Caravaggio's "Entombment"—Legitimate falsification—Argument for adjustment of tonal keys.

IN the matter of tone, as in most other matters relating to pictures, the temperament and the intentions of the artist tolerate no law or standard. Side by side one may see pictures in a high key and pictures in a low, both treating of the same conditions of lighting. The fact is that there really exists no standard; no mean, by which the tone of a picture can be tested. The matter resolves itself into a choice for the artist between different conditions of vision.

Supposing a man has been for an hour or more in the sunlight and then comes suddenly into a room of ordinary illumination: what meets his eye will be of an extremely low tone, for his irides are still contracted in their adjustment to the glare of the sun. The iris does not work rapidly, and several moments must elapse before the pupils of his eyes are sufficiently opened to admit the lesser light of the room in volume enough to give him the average impressions.

Supposing again, he sits for an hour in a dimly-lit chamber and then goes out into the daylight of even dull and thunderous weather: the scene will then appear to him in a brilliantly light key until his irides have contracted to the normal degree of comfort.

Between the extremes of little and much light upon the retina there is an infinitesimal gradation of keys, any one of which could supply pictorial subject; and in every one the claims of truth could be substantiated provided the painting were properly done.

It is obvious that according as the artist inclines to the effect of the open or the closed iris, so his pictures will be either dark or light. It might be thought that the usual or normal state of vision should be accepted as a canon. And so it might, but for the great loss of opportunities for dramatic effect that such a mean would imply. There seems to be one thing only in matters of tone that is absolute and that is the correct relation of one tone to another in the same picture, whatever the key adopted. It is by this relation of tone that a picture hits or misses.

One of the first things a painter learns is that paint cannot be lighter than paint at its whitest, and that white paint is hopelessly dark for an actual imitation of sunlight. But he learns next that by adjustment of other tones he can make the relatively dull white paint look brighter than it should, even for sunlight. From these incontrovertible facts it seems to follow inevitably that actual imitation is placed out of the bounds of what is either possible or necessary; whilst correct relation remains as a test of truth, at any rate where the realistic critic is concerned. Unfortunately for that worthy, relation itself is not invariably respected by artists, who usually have some express motive or artistic demand which will lead them into many a violation of the natural adjustment of tones.

There is an extremely valuable example of this conflict of principles in Morland's "Interior of a Stable"

in the National Gallery. This is certainly a work which has proved itself to have a wide popular appeal. Pictorially considered its tonal values are beautiful. They give the spectator a grateful glow of satisfaction so long as he can keep his critical propensities out of the way. But sooner or later those beautifully disposed tone values tumble into the balance of logic and are found wanting. One has to chastise one's mutinous ideas in order to preserve the feeling of enjoyment. A dumb argument goes on as to whether it matters or whether it does not, that the white horse, which is well within the dark interior, happens, notwithstanding, to be many degrees higher in tone than the sky itself seen through the open doorway. There is a window as well as a door, but light from neither could fall upon the flanks of the horse to the extent that the painted facts demand. Do what we will, this anomaly and rebellious overthrow of naturalism, does in the long run mar our enjoyment of a fine work of art.

Such a risk is always in ambush for the painter who is more emotional than intellectual. One man is charmed with a streak of sunlight upon the grass and expresses his feeling about it by the forcible process of representing all the rest of the grass in a depth of tint which it never yet bore while the sun shone. Another man is captivated by the flicker and glare of the sun upon ground and trees, and he renders the dazzle by representing nothing dark at all, not even the shadows. Here is a vast difference in points of view! Both are right psychologically: both wrong physically. These two cases typify the leaning towards emotional truth rather than intellectual truth.



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J. Sapp, Master of William Turner

MOTTO KNEELING IN PRAYER
(Millbank Turner Collection)

An effective massing of lights and darks with ample suggestion. In a sense a literal copy of actuality this picture is an instance of naturalism from a mind stored with facts.



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George Morano

THE INSIDE OF A STABLE
(National Gallery)

A beautiful tonal scheme arranged without regard to the claims of naturalism.

The question here arises whether the pursuit of emotional views and impressions of nature may not carry art adrift and out of sight if some anchorage is not found in the intellectual and logical aspects of pictorial representations. Men know that ordinarily lit scenes are in reality neither all very dark nor all very light. They are therefore excusably mystified by pictures made in these extreme methods for the sake of securing some fleeting and accidental impression of the artist's, and not to present what is, to them, the more generally seen aspect of nature.

The painter, it should be remembered, has not the normal vision. His is a vision grown hypersensitive by training and exercise. The way that he sees things is different from the way the most intellectual man living would see, without some similar initiation (which, of course, all cultured people have more or less). Has not the "man-in-the-street" then, some ground for preferring the traditional presentment of nature in pictures, which is neither the brute force of a dark effect nor the dazzling impulsion of a light one? May he not resent those tonal efforts to bludgeon or to hypnotise him into seeing something in nature which he never saw before; and which human vision in normal conditions does not see?

The methods of Rembrandt, Velasquez (at times) and certain other painters following the style of Caravaggio, were on the dark side, as those of Turner and some moderns are on the light side. But none of these is open to the charge of tonal trickery. Their effects are but the result of their choosing a section of the gamut of natural tone which best suited their purposes. The dark painters chose a section at the dark end of the

gamut, and Turner in his later works chose his from the light end. In both cases their relations of tone were correct up to a point where the depth or the luminosity of pigment failed them. Beyond that point no modulation was possible at all; something like black having to answer for all tones below the middle half-tones in one case; and something like white serving for all tones brighter than a middle half-tone in the other case. The results were identical with those of human vision controlled by the opening or closing of the iris, and were therefore perfectly legitimate.

The same shortened scale is possible in the camera. An under-exposed photograph is the equivalent of the partly-closed iris. The amount of light available for the lens registers the tones of things without violating proper relation, and as far as it gives any values at all it gives them correctly. Where the light is too attenuated to affect the plate sufficiently the result in the print will be dark spaces. In the over-exposed photograph—the equivalent of the open iris—we have light in excess, showing up passages which normally would be unbroken masses of low tone. Shadows are almost barely recognisable as such; whilst sky, distances and all light tones merge indistinguishably into white, being beyond the point at which gradation is registered. But since Nature does not make mistakes, where gradation can still be maintained it is quite in order. In this respect those works of Turner's that are in a light scheme resemble the over-exposed photograph.¹

¹ To get photographic prints which would exactly reproduce the aspect of drawings made with the iris open, it would be necessary to treat the over-exposed one with a little over-development also, in order to avoid the flatness of effect characteristic of a negative in this con-

The view presented to the eye with the opened iris as it comes from a dark place is naturally not the same as would ultimately come to the retina before a light scene by the slow adjustment of the iris. For the view of the open iris in a light place is by physiological necessity a momentary one and in an extraordinary high key. It is indeed an impression, in a limited sense of the word. It is transitory, evanescent; and it cannot give complete or even approximately truthful records of objects thus observed, because the effect arises from conditions of light in the eye and not from the actual relations of light and shade in the objects.

If there is any argument against impressionism of this sort, it can be found precisely at this point. The kind of painting which seeks to perpetuate this transitory and, so far, unusual and abnormal aspect of things is perhaps undertaking a supererogatory task in most cases. It perpetuates what the average eye can never see for more than an instant, and then has no desire to see. We wait, without making effort until the action of seeing is a comfortable one; and from this fact it would seem that pictures giving such aspects could have no interest to the generality of people who are concerned with the normal key. But it has been shown nevertheless, that the glare which assails the eye with the open iris, has a moral value; and many painters have availed themselves of this to bring home to the spectator the force of prevalent sunlight.

dition. To do this would not be in any way to weaken the analogy offered, since the further development of the image formed by light upon the plate does but amount to strengthening the light action in a similar ratio. The main principle would therefore be quite unaffected.

The moral force of a natural view is so much greater than what is possible to the artist, that there is an excuse—rather a necessity—for him to endeavour to make good his loss by resource. He can do this by placing his tonal scheme either high or low in the scale available for his purpose. He can place his scheme so high that most of his tones look bright and thus give value to the low ones; or so low that most of them look dark to the enhancement of the high ones.

Rembrandt affected the scale which is low in the gamut of tones; for by its adoption he gave that valuable lustre to his high lights which make so much for the beauty of his works. But Rembrandt did not adopt the closed iris view. There is a wealth of detail in his shadows incompatible with such a view. He achieved by deliberate effort the force of effect which most other painters of dark subjects have achieved by impressionism and the closed iris. Caravaggio, Zurbaran, and Velasquez, for example, do not, in such subjects, show much detail in their shadows, but let those darker parts tell as quiet, nescient relief to the high lights, where all the detail is to be found in their works. The "Christ and the two Disciples" in the National Gallery, by the first-named painter, shows reflected lights in the shadows at important parts, such as the hands of Christ; but the whole work is in a very low key.

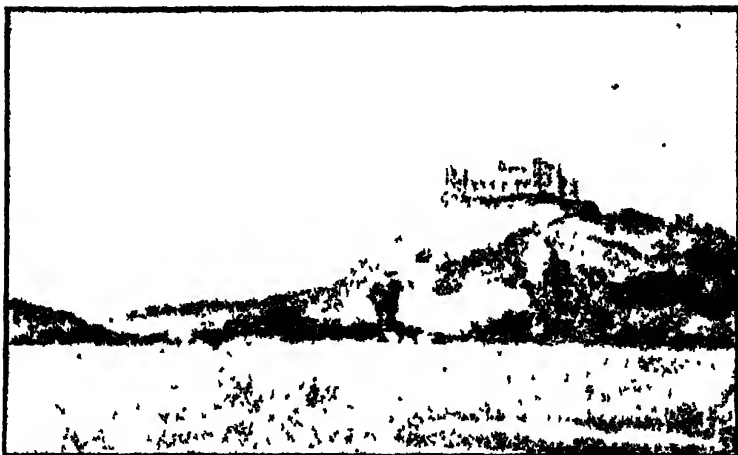
Pictures that are painted in a high key—landscapes for the most part—are of modern date, and have come chiefly from the hands of Turner and the modern impressionists. They represent the view of the momentary

open iris. Their massing of large light spaces with a few accents of dark, show the very opposite of the system of Caravaggio, Zurbaran, and Velasquez.

In the two accompanying diagrams I have attempted to show something like the different effects resulting from the vision of the iris respectively opened and closed. The sketches are not direct from nature, but made in the studio; they are therefore put forward as only approximately accurate.

A prolonged view allowing the iris to close would admit much more darkening of the lower tones, and much more definition in them. It has no doubt been noted by everybody that in open country flooded with sunlight, the eyes in time become accustomed to the glare, and the whole scene gradually assumes a darker aspect. This, I am disposed to believe, is due to extreme contraction of the iris. It is what would occur during a lengthy painting of such a subject; and, in fact, it is what a great many paintings betray. In Bonvin's "Village Green" (National Gallery) it is particularly remarkable, for this is a very low-toned picture representing intense sunlight. The sensation of light can be most effectually achieved by seizing the first impression, which is made before the irides have contracted too far, and by preserving it as vividly as possible in the mind while the sketch is made. Such impressionism may be false to *physiological* realism; but is, of all methods, the most true to *psychological* realism.

The two extremes of light and dark treatment are fairly parallel; but they differ in this respect, that whereas it is advisable to retain the *open* iris effect when the object is to represent a sunny landscape; it is not



An approximation to the light tone of a sketch made with the irides open as the result of a brief view.

necessary to retain the *closed* iris effect when the object is to represent a dark interior. The dark interior, shown without any detail in the shadows, is beyond the occasion; for the natural effect of such a scene is forcible enough when detail has grown visible and half-tones have established themselves; and that natural view is more in accordance with what is noted in common experience. It is for this reason that to some art-lovers the subtlety of Rembrandt surpasses in beauty the somewhat crass simplifications of the dark painters who followed Caravaggio; particularly Zurbaran and Velasquez.

There is one factor in all this however, that should not be disregarded. It is the manner in which the light comes. In certain interiors the light may enter forcibly by a small window, in which case the conditions of illumination would be similar to those of Zurbaran's "Franciscan Monk" (National Gallery). A like effect



An approximation to the dark tone of a sketch made with the irides partly closed as the result of a prolonged view

results from the limelight of the stage, and also out of doors, from the sun himself when the air is clear. The sharp distinction between light and shade, being due to concentration—otherwise lack of diffusion—is conducive to broad and simple statements in chiaroscuro. Those inky shadows that we find cast from buildings on a clear sunny day lose the purity of their darkness in proportion as the light becomes diffused by the more vaporous condition of the atmosphere.

But whether the light were concentrated, or diffused, or reflected into the shadows, the principle of the adjustment of the iris and its relation to the tone and definition of the picture would not be affected. It is certain that Zurbaran might have seen much more in the shadows of his Monk if he had wished to; but he preferred the effect of the closed iris in a dark place, with a concentrated illumination.

In Caravaggio's "Entombment" (Vatican) the illu-

58 THE APPEAL OF THE PICTURE

mination is likewise concentrated, and inasmuch as there are practically no reflected lights, the spectator is led to assume that the scene of the picture is some very dark place where the light comes in strongly at a hole or chink, and where the walls are so dark or so distant as not to cause reflected lights in the shadows. In so far as the subjects chosen by the "dark" painters are, as here, suitable to the style employed the results must be deemed successful, and vice versa. The final criterion is naturalism: that touchstone of truth, beauty and popularity.

Whilst then it would appear to be intellectually defensible to place the scale of tone either high or low in the natural gamut at any time, although custom has established a medial position, it seems unscientific to allow the emotional demands of a picture to alter the relative value of tones within that chosen scale. There will always be people who can understand and appreciate work so treated; but at the same time there will always be people also to question the artistic ethics of forcing an effect upon a spectator by a violation of universally known phenomena. The latter class might justifiably argue that it was not worthy of the dignity of a student of nature thus to stoop to falsification for the sake of driving home his point: that he ought to be able to achieve his end without such doubtful resources, otherwise the inefficiency of his art must stand confessed. Such an argument would not be without foundation, for any falsification that goes so far as to shock the beholder as a downright violation of natural fact has evidently overstepped the mark. The excess of virtue becomes a vice. It is certainly not within the province of art



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Pietro Caldara called Caracci, etc.

THE ENTOMBMENT (Rome, Vatican Gallery)

A sample of the method of the "dark" painter. The lighting suppresses a concentrated illumination in a dark place.

to offer unpleasant shocks or to abuse common experience.

A very large proportion of pictures which fail in popular favour do so because their authors have been unable to exercise that artistic tact which is one of the concomitants of genius. They have lost that proper balance of factors which results in harmony and is characteristic of a work that is said to be "in keeping."

An artist is not supreme until he can achieve all the dramatic intensity of his subject without sacrificing the intrinsic beauty and fitness of its parts. Rembrandt always fulfilled these conditions in his finest studies of lighting. Even in the theatrical effect of some of his compositions, where we feel that a shaft of concentrated light is not warranted by the exigencies of the pictorial material, we have only to grant that by some uncommon agency a shaft of light *is* able thus to fall upon the chief figures of the group and then all is plain sailing. With one exception, namely that world-puzzle, "The Night-Watch," the working out of shadows, reflections and gradations of light is done with such artistic thoroughness as to carry perfect conviction, and the most logical mind is satisfied. That is not the case with Morland's horse upon which the access of light is neither accounted for in the scene as depicted, nor convincingly presented as coming from a point in front of the picture. The effect there is simply that of an arbitrary brightening of tone, almost as though the horse were partly incandescent.

But Rembrandts are rare. The generality of painters have had to admit that within proper bounds and in the right direction, some slight falsification is inevitable in a work of art. It is very rarely that the great actor best

impresses his audience by acting exactly as people do in real life. He can no more be successful in imitating common life, which convention has almost reduced to prescribed codes in the expression of emotion, than he can go to the other extreme and tear a passion to tatters. What he has to do is to give point and a relief to the particular emotion he wishes to convey by picking it out from the grey level of conventional behaviour that would encompass it in real life. He must in fact heighten the elemental colours of that emotion. He must bare the breast and be more demonstrative than the well-bred gentleman who walks as usual to his office without any outward sign of the melting of his fortunes or the breaking of his heart.

The case of the painter is parallel with that of the actor. He will communicate his own emotions about the subject of his picture by a non-aggressive insistence upon that motive over and above all others in the work. If he strive to make it keep its proper place among all the other matters it will possibly be overlooked. He must clear the ground for it so to speak, by suppressing its competitors, and to do this involves some falsification of relation of parts. The realism of unimportant circumstance may suffer, but a greater truth will be gained, namely that of the absorbing impression created by some arresting phenomenon in the contemplation of which other matters fade in the mind.

VI

TONAL EFFECT

Pictorial attractiveness of effect—Similes of the bottle of medicine and the chess-board—Simplicity and complexity of contrasting tones—"Mood" largely due to effect—Mood inclines to a brooding phase of the mind—Pictorial effect due to chiaroscuro—Certain conditions of lighting necessary for it.

THE popular mind is very readily affected by the tonal effect of a picture. By the tonal effect is meant the cogency with which the tones are presented; that cogency being due to the relation which they bear to each other as the result of special arrangement and juxtaposition.

Nothing is more common than to find pictures nicely composed and skilfully executed which nevertheless have nothing about them that is arresting: no broad distinction between light and dark passages that will bring the observer up short with exclamations of admiration on his lips. On the other hand it is quite as truthful to say that pictures frequently occur which have been badly composed and unskilfully executed, but possess nevertheless something which does arrest the observer and fill him with admiration.

This quality, which is independent, to a great degree, of design and composition; of colour and form, lies in certain nice adjustments of the tones of the picture. Generally speaking those adjustments involve contrast and simplicity. It is by no means necessary that the intensity of the tones should be great; for it is possible

to have good pictorial effect in a picture that is made up of, say, white and grey. The contrast necessary is rather that of the disposition of the masses of tone.

To take a homely simile, one might instance a bottle of medicine in which the mixture separates easily into liquid and deposit. If those separated matters be allowed to typify dark and light tones, they may represent the simple arrangement which makes for pictorial effect. If the bottle be shaken up so that the result is one general tone of grey, that may be taken to represent the dispersed and intermingled tones of an ineffective picture.

A step nearer to actual pictorial conditions would be a

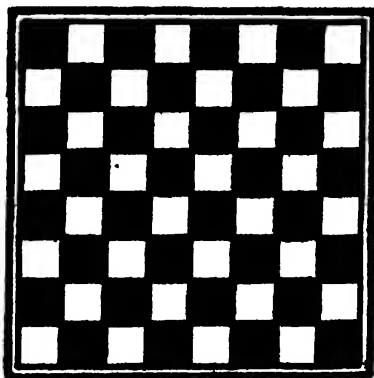


FIG. 1. The equal distribution of the chess-board.

chess-board because this shows the equal distribution of small masses of tone. Fig. 1. The effect of the chequers on a chess-board is a strong one of its kind—that is undeniable; but its use is particularly applicable when what is required is exactly an “all-over” interest. There is no interest in any particular square: if there were, the chess-board pattern would be imperfect. The

essential idea of such an effect is that the surface bearing the squares should have equal significance at every point. The necessity for this is very obvious when the idea is applied to material for a suit of clothes. Check patterns in cloth are necessarily all-over patterns. In pictures it is usually the very reverse effect that is wanted. If the objects, light or dark, in our pictures are equally disposed after the manner of a chess-board, we are faced with the all-over effect that is only tolerable in some

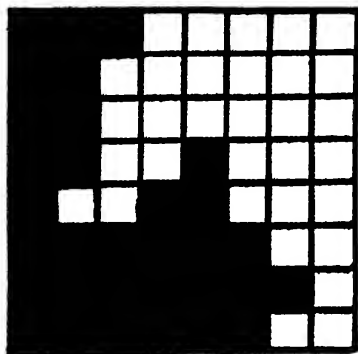


FIG. 2. The massed effect of the rearranged chess-board.

styles of decorative work, and is very bad from a pictorial point of view.

Suppose now these chequers of the draught-board were to be rearranged, the light ones and the dark ones coming together so that instead of being a lot of small separate masses they would tell as a large mass of black and a large mass of white. Fig. 2. If that were done the board would tell a very different tale. It would then make two statements, each forcibly uttered, instead of 64 feeble statements. That difference would be the same as the difference between a duet or a dialogue, on the



An example of diffusion of interest, resulting from a scattering of light and dark accents.

one hand, and the all-overish buzz of general conversation on the other. There is a simplicity in the latter, to be sure, but it is the result of over-complexity, and it implies the despairing surrender of human powers of analysis.

The simplicity of the effect of the even buzz of conversation is the equivalent of the simplicity of the check suiting, which becomes mere grey before the inability of the eye to detach and take interest in the tiny separate squares.

In pictures it is just as desirable that the mind should not be forced thus metaphorically to give up the attempt because there happens to be nothing of sufficient force or interest to engage it. No such embarrassment is involved in the simplicity of the massed effect. The mind quickly and easily seizes and understands the



An example of simplicity of effect resulting from massing of tones

simple statements of light and dark, finding pleasurable the excitement caused by their contrast. Thus interest in the effect is at once secured. By securing an effect the tamest of compositions and the feeblest form may be made to take on significance and interest.

A lake scene is given here under two different aspects. One is so full of conflicting accents as to suffer by a diffusion of interest. The other shows a simpler disposition of tones, and therefore secures finer pictorial interest.

That indispensable quality which is known by the name of "mood" in landscape is very largely an endowment by effect. Dramatic force; the mystery of impenetrable shadows; the poetic vagueness of flat tones and the flare and glow of light passages, all owe their value to the peculiar disposition of tones which

effect implies, and all minister to the mood of the work of art.

I do not say that it is impossible to have a mood in a picture that is devoid of contrast; but the mood existing in works so schemed is due more to colour than to tone. The mood that is within call of a monochrome picture is chiefly invoked by the great and leading facts of tone effectively interpreted. Without this the mood will escape from monochrome landscape where there is no colour to retain it.

In all classes of work the mood must force its great idea upon the spectator, whether that idea be of brightness or of gloom; of seething life or solitariness; of storm or sunny peace; of mystery or of homeliness.

The subject of mood will be treated of more thoroughly in a subsequent chapter; but it is convenient here to trace its indebtedness to effect.

In most cases of a strong mood the leading sensation will be found to be more allied to brooding and seriousness than to brightness and gaiety. There are, of course, pictures in plenty which have joyous moods invoked by scenes of sunshine and prosperity. But even in these the spirit of Nature asserts itself as something imposing, grand, and sublime; and face to face with the sublimity of Nature, even in a picture, gaiety becomes suppressed. An actual scene of sunshine and prosperity may react upon the spirits of a person who does not bother himself with what is before his eyes; but when the mind is concentrated upon the natural effect, as it must be more particularly before a picture, a philosophic rather than a joyous state of mind results; and it is for that reason

that a mood of any sort involves the serious and the brooding phases.

Somehow or other the brooding phase has more affinity for the melancholy aspects of nature than for the joyous: probably because laughter is volatile and within easy call, whilst seriousness is slow-footed and comes by way of thought. Nobody ever yet cogitated himself into laughter; but anybody can think himself into moods of melancholy.

In a word, it seems a fair generalisation to say that pictorial mood inclines more to the side of tragedy than of comedy. Hence it is much easier to invoke a mood in a picture by lowering skies than by bright ones; by gloomy ravines than by smiling uplands; by sullen tarns and gaunt reeds than by babbling streams and gay flowers.

It must not be thought that I am advocating those pictures that are impressive with gloom in preference to those that are charming with brightness. I do but submit that gloom gives the readier mood; and I would further say that it is more within the power of the picture-maker to express gloom than to express brightness. Dark skies, dark mountains, dark woods, are easily to be had; the difficulty lies in handling them so that they may become eloquent factors in the effect; for it is not enough merely to oppose these dark objects by light spaces—unless we are content to make posters. Gradation makes demands, and middle tones require to be in proper relation. These obligations must be met without weakening the broad effect, so that skies and mountains shall look like what they are intended to represent and not like the discoloured areas of paper or the patches of pigment which they really are.

It is needless to say that the greatest factor in pictorial effect is the chiaroscuro of the design, and that is mainly governed by the lighting of the subject. Neither need it be pointed out that the most effective pictures are seldom those where the light is diffused and general. However beautiful such pictures may be, judged from other standpoints, they have not the character known as tonal effect.

The conditions of lighting which would make an ideal day for the camera would doubtless result in excellent records of pretty "bits" and pretty subjects; but it would hardly be conducive to those rarer inspirations which come by way of a mood. The greyness of a foggy day makes for monotony. Blazing sunshine with black shadows gives effect only when skilfully handled and treated. Blazing sunshine with the shadows all lit up by reflected lights gives scarcely an effect at all.

Large masses of broad tone give the best pictorial effect. The light may come from anywhere—from the back or the front; but it must be simply and distinctly rendered; not complexly or vaguely, and not confused or discounted by small subsidiary points of light. Such effects are most easily obtainable at early morning or at the approach of evening, whether the sun is visible or not; and also when looking towards the sun at large masses in tone. It is then that we have natural objects such as hills, clumps of trees, crags, castles, cathedrals, houses, mills or anything else that is large and interesting, telling as broad masses against the lighter tone of the sky, and possibly the tonal arrangement will be exactly reversed when the light comes from the opposite direction.

Under certain conditions of over-clouding, the light



Breadth of effect due to the direction from which the light comes.

may come from the sky at any time of the day in such a manner as to give to natural objects a special interest either of brightness or of gloom. This is seen most beautifully and forcibly at the time of thunderstorms, when against the black clouds the darkest of trees may gleam in a high tone although no actual sunshine is present; again, when the clouds lift and the further sky is revealed behind the same trees, they may look as though carved in ebony; as in the diagram on page 65.

Such are the varying beauties of Nature which afford pictorial effect, at such times as she throws off the orderliness of normality. When she breaks with wild glee into unrestrained laughter, the artist's work must glow and gleam with light: when she gives way to anger and tears, the picture will be grave and heavy. In each case the force and accent will appear where the opposite tone is sparingly placed.

VII

COLOUR AS A FACTOR

The colour key—The mellow key of old paintings—Varnish—Warm colour and cool—Derivation of the term "warm"—Good colour due to qualifying and gradation—Abuses in "decorative" colouring—Effect of modelling and lighting upon colour—Landscape as a schooling—Attitude of Leighton and of Turner towards colour—Relative claims of form and colour—Growth of colour appreciation in individuals—German period of renunciation of colour.

THE subject of colour is of the utmost complexity and teems with as many points of view as there are people to hold them. Its questions must therefore be discussed with all possible deliberation and very circumspectly.

Colour in a picture is manifested in many ways; but for the moment it may be considered only as it affects the general appearance. The principles governing general colour tonality are much the same as those which operate in the tonality of dark and light. Just as it was remarked that to a spectator entering a gallery the tone of pictures impresses as inclining either to the dark or to the light side; so will pictures impress him as being also of some general hue; brown, golden, grey, mauve or what not. Here, as in the former case of light or dark, it is a matter of key. If a picture have any jarring and discordant note of colour in it, then that note is out of key.

One of the marks of immature or indifferent painting is lawless and discordant colouring. On the other hand, that which imparts to pictures the safe, dignified and masterly look which carries assurance to the spectator is the proper influence of the key throughout all the

differing tints. This key-colour acts as a kind of medium or vehicle for all the other colours. They lie within it and are affected by it; but are not of it. If one were to paint upon a piece of canvas with French blue just as it comes from the colourman's tube, and then hold it in close comparison with a patch of what looked like a similar blue on the robe of a figure, say, by Titian; it would be found to appear cold and raw by contrast with the Titian blue, which, in its turn, would seem to have been modified by a rosy yellow. But upon removing the raw blue the other would look pure enough taken together with the other colours of the picture. That rosy yellow tone is, in fact, felt through all the colours, each of which it attunes to the same key.

It is a general rule that this vehicle tint, binding all together in harmony, should be of a warm tone. Indeed it is hardly conceivable that a cold key would be pleasant in usual conditions. The specious glamour possessed by many an old painting is frequently due to the yellowing of the varnish that covers it. This qualifies all the tints of the underlying pigments and harmonises them into the golden glow which is the characteristic popularly looked for in an "old master." For the same reason a picture that is devarnished frequently presents, together with its freshened appearance, a raucous and acrid scheme of colour which the varnish had qualified.

But the use of a varnish that will become mellow postulates no sense of colour on the part of the artist. He could as little claim credit for its adventitious charm as he could for the cast given by a sheet of yellow glass placed upon his picture. Either resource would indeed stand as evidence of the paucity of colour in the work as it left the painter's hands.

This conclusion may lead some to think that the point might be pushed further, and that the same arguments would apply to a painter who "glazed" or put over his work a thin painting of some rich transparent pigment. But there is a difference; for since the "glaze" becomes an integral part of the picture—something intended never to be removed, and in that respect differing from varnish and glass—it would have to be assumed that the painter calculated and allowed for this final glaze, which therefore would belong to his colour-scheme, and that fact would entitle him to take credit for the complete result.

It is an indisputable fact that the golden glow, associated with "old masters" is universally accepted as the most desirable of any general hue for pictures. It is worth while considering whether this preference is due to the strength of tradition and association, or whether it rests upon intrinsic qualities.

Pictures in a blue key are by no means uncommon. More occasionally they may be seen in a red key; less often in a green, and so on. But not one of these schemes is in really general use. Moreover they are usually consequent upon the subject-matter depicted, and that is not a condition of the golden or yellow glow; which can be felt over blue skies, green trees or red robes indiscriminately. It would appear therefore that yellow is better fitted in its nature for a pervading tint than any other colour; and the preference for it may be proved to be only partially due to the fact that it happens to be the colour which oil and varnish have assumed with age upon notable works of art.

. Yellow is the colour which is most suggestive of light.

It is the pigment that best stands the test of attenuation into nothingness, or white. Blue and red when taken by the utmost gradation towards white still retain their bluey or pinky cast so long as they can be discerned at all. But yellow merges imperceptibly into white. It anticipates whiteness long before it is short of being yellow, and at a certain point defies classification as either one or the other. It is the generally accepted link between colour and whiteness. Palettes are "set" with yellow next the white, and Turner's sensations of brightness were almost invariably made by approaching white through the yellow gradations. The sun himself is either yellow or white-hot yellow.

These considerations lead to the conclusion that a pervading yellow glow in a picture means nothing in respect to the actual colouring of parts, and is accepted as having no bearing upon the subject-matter, but stands merely as a harmonising agent causing less disturbance than would any other colour. Its only significance is that it adds warmth, enrichment and a sensation of light.

The word "warm" suggests another train of thought and excuses a little digression at this point.

It is always salutary to ask "why?" Why is warm colour preferable to cool? We can only assume that our bodies are so constituted as to cause us always to wish to be warm and never cold. If that is a correct assumption it seems likely that association of ideas is at the root of the colour question. That we should like to be warm always and only cool as occasion demands, seems due to the fact that most living things exist by virtue of the sun. The sun is, after all, a very good

first cause, and there seems no need to go behind him. There may be fishes in the polar seas that are less dependent upon his rays although they owe their being to his agency, and it might be possible to elicit proof that such fishes preferred cool colours. Since the sun, in a more or less degree is necessary to the comfort and happiness of living things then living things must feel favourably inclined towards all that he stands for in the way of colour: that is to say, in the yellows and reds with which he bedecks himself and the objects upon which he looks.

In fire, the question is brought a step nearer, for its hues are more nearly comparable with pigments than are those of the sun. Fire is a thing possible to imitate by painting. Its hues range from white through the yellows and reds to the deepest shades of the latter; but scarcely if ever to crimson in the burning of timber which is the elemental idea of fire. The influence of blue is so rare as to be negligible, and that is why one feels the conventional stage fire of crimson tinsel or "ruby" lamps to be anomalous and unconvincing.

Here then, through the yellows and reds, is the range of colours felt to be, and known as, hot. When blue is added, as in crimson, the hue begins to cool. Blue and orange-red therefore, stand as the poles of cool and warm colours. The coldest can be warmed and the warmest cooled by the influence of their polar complements. The sunny blue sky is not cold, and, as has been pointed out, blue may be painted warm.

Our psychological responsiveness to a warm colour is therefore akin to our physical responsiveness to a warm temperature. We admire what is good for us—

an excellent and logical principle, applicable to ethics as well as to æsthetics.

But here there starts up another question. Why, if these preferences are founded upon physical constitution, does the savage and untutored person so often delight in colours that are crude, raw and unmitigatedly cold? To that seeming *non plus* one can only reply that the psychology of the cultivated mind is much more deep and sensitive than that of the savage, who really has little or none of it at all. His physical constitution manifests preferences that are instinctive rather than deliberate. He likes the warmth of fire; but since his mind is crude it could only find the semblance of the comfort of fire in a dye or a pigment if he possessed the faculty for association of ideas in a considerable degree.

To return now to our main consideration. The æsthetic value of a tint superimposed upon a coloured work of art, whether by means of varnish or glass or a glaze of pigment, would seem to be due to the blending which takes place with the underlying tints.

It is not easy to see why the mind should be better pleased by colour thus qualified by admixture; but the fact remains that good colour is colour that results from a blend. This is true not only in painting, but in textiles and all manner of decorative coloration. Upholstery fabrics are held to be best in colour when the dyes by which they have been stained approach to the tertiary group: in other words, when some admixture, either natural or artificial has reduced the tints somewhat towards a common standard, or family likeness. An expensive Turkey carpet is not dyed in tints which a colour-maker would call pure.

To the sensitive mind pure colours give pleasure only under rare conditions. As a rule they are felt to be raw, although they may be brilliant and in their own way beautiful. It is the primitive mind that loves pure brilliant colour; blazing reds, stinging greens, palpitating blues—and it likes them in exciting contrast. To a cultivated mind this dazzle and excitement is unpleasant and causes a jumping, swimming sensation in the eye. The writer has a pair of curtains made by the natives of Mexico. They are ornamented with transverse stripes of emerald green, crimson, bright blues, etc. When they were in use they were greatly admired by domestics; but execrated by visitors of refinement.

It would seem that to the eye which has become refined and delicate, the juxtaposition of large patches of bright primary colours causes so great an excitement of those “rods and cones” which physiologists tell us are the receptive parts of the retina, as to cause actual physical pain, probably in the same way that piercing and shrill shrieks of a penny whistle may drive a musician to distraction whilst it may delight the primitive and robust nerves of children and savages. Indeed “noisy” is a term frequently used by critics to describe staring and riotous colour.

It does not follow from this that harmonious colour is necessarily “sad” or debased or dirty. On the contrary, purity is an indispensable requirement of good colour. But experience teaches that the quality which makes beautiful colour is the modification of pure hues by gradation of intensity and by mingling of tints. The mingling may come about in any number of ways. In oil-painting there is the superimposed glaze, and in water-colour the “wash” over all, either of which

methods may make good colour of what was harsh. A hot and "twangy" water-colour is often saved by the green tinge in the glass that covers it. The modern mode of pastel-painting consists of "hatches" or lines of one tint drawn over passages of other tints, which results in a qualifying of both. No oil-painter could get fine colour by using broad areas of primary tints just as they came from the tubes. He avails himself of all possible means of mingling, from making an admixture upon his palette to placing the pure colour in small touches side by side on the canvas. The last method may be a discordant one if the touches are too large or if the work be too closely examined; but it is claimed that at a proper distance the colour-patches merge and harmonise. Unfortunately in most cases the required distance is so great as to leave the subject behind.

In the industrial arts the principle of mingling is a greater factor than is generally supposed. The available methods in colour-printing for wallpapers, textiles, and such articles, or for the decoration of books, show-cards, or fancy stationery, are based upon the same principle. In lithography, relief-printing, roller-printing, and even in stencilling, it is seldom that colour is applied in such a way that large areas of it stand unqualified by any admixture: that is, if good colour is the main concern.

The great truth is that whatever be the kind of work, the interest and charm of its colour, which is to make the goods marketable and appreciated by the best sections of the public, is due to the joint effect of tints judiciously applied—not separately as a savage or a young child would apply them, but impinging upon each

other at certain points or overlying each other altogether and that in various degrees of intensity. This is seen most convincingly in good lithography and in the modern "three-colour" work where only three tints are employed to produce elaborate and often beautiful effects. Indeed, many three-colour printers rely upon still further modification by grey over-printings to enhance the result, thus borrowing from the usages of lithography a further resource beyond the strictly theoretical sufficiencies of their scientific method.

The other principle upon which good colour depends, namely the gradation of its intensity, is one that is very generally recognised. Even quite unsophisticated people are alive to its charm. Gradation, as already pointed out in a former chapter, makes a strong appeal to the lay mind; and yet within the last half century the charms of gradation have lost prestige in some unaccountable way amongst painters of the so-called decorative class. Such artists must be actuated by other motives than the quest of beauty or they would never wittingly set their faces against one of the most potent principles of beauty in colour.

In the poster and the child's picture-book the use of areas of unmodulated or "flat" colour has become general. Where the colour itself is good, and a specially schemed design makes the flatness legitimate, there is no doubt much to be said for the expediency of such a convention in the cheaper productions of this kind of work. But the picture-maker, decorative or otherwise, stands in no need of such illogical modes which do but stultify his resources. One sees modern works even upon the walls of the Royal Academy, looking partly

like naturalistic presentments, partly like posters and partly like mediæval missals. Their colour is bright and insistent. It comes at one with an onslaught and is highly exciting. But in this respect it is the antithesis of what decorative painting should be, and intrinsically it is not beautiful colour since it is but a patchwork of tints without subtlety, amongst which raw vermilion frequently enjoys first place.

To be beautiful, colour must ebb and flow, palpitate, melt and crystallise. It can do this only by the mingling and inter-fraction of its parts; and at the same time it must, to change the metaphor, dwindle here and flame there.

Even the gradated black of a print or a monochrome drawing is a joy: much more so are the subtle cadencies of colour, whether they depict an evening sky or the modelling of a beer barrel. A patch of grey or black is empty, passionless, even dead; but modulate it so that its tones vary from deep to high and it becomes alive. It has gained a soul. It expresses movement and purpose. More still can this life and soul be given to a patch of colour which, however beautiful intrinsically, must remain but a house-painter's "coat" whilst it is without modulation or gradation.

It is remarkable that such evident truths do not hold their own amongst all reasonable men. There are dozens of artists to-day working in the manner of house-painters. For example, garments and stuffs are represented not as they would be seen, beautified by natural illumination and the conditions of use, but as if they were nailed out on boards and presented to a full and equal lighting. The draper's counter-man is much wiser

who takes a fabric and bunches it up and festoons it in his hand to tempt the fair customer. Of course the artist imagines he is being *naïve* and archaic.

Accordingly as the light catches strongly or feebly the differing planes of an object, so the colour (apart from the tone) will be lowered or heightened; for the intensity of colour varies in accordance with the light upon it. We see form long after the light has failed us for seeing colour. The adage is quite true that "at night all cats are grey" since the colour-sense fails as the light fails. There is therefore a dwindling and a culmination of colour corresponding with the varied lighting of an object.

Another beauty in the natural object is due to reflections to and fro in the folds of the material. These give that inner warmth and enhancement of hue which the old painters loved so well. Further there is the play of cross lights from other surfaces, or cool lights from the sky, which add many subtle delights to the bald local-colour of a thing.

Such are a few of the conditions which make colour beautiful to the artistic eye. The modern "decorative" painter turns his back upon them as being realism, to avoid which he paints things as though they were flat, using his tints flatly in consequence. A few decorators of notoriety are to-day using a flat leathery brown for flesh, and what are known as "muddy" tints for the rest of their schemes, thus falling away even from the bright raw colour of their companions of the mediæval school.

Landscape affords the best school for colourists. The

open country is subject to every influence that can affect the appearance of things. Not only do the seasons of the year alter the face of nature, but every wind, every atmospheric change from day to day, and every momentary movement in the sky present infinite arrangements of tones and tints. It is on that account that the study of landscape gives the artist the richest and most varied experience, bringing him to see that the beauty of things lies far less in their local colour than in the way they are affected by changing lights.

The studio painter of still-life or *genre* subjects or decorative schemes becomes fond of the mere hues of different materials. Artists of the Leighton type paint pictures that are made up of beautiful tints applied in definite areas—a method which misses the throbbing life of colour. One could cut out the purples, the blues and the yellows from Leighton's works at fairly distinct edges; but Turner's pictures would bear no such analysis. His colour flowed over forms as light does in nature. In spite of its variation it was regarded by him in its complete scheme as a single idea—the main idea in the picture—the soul of the picture as it has been called. In his very latest works, which are sometimes said to be unfinished, it is possible that he shows us that "soul" standing alone, without the material form which possibly he himself never wished to present.

It would not be reasonable to expect a picture boasting only of a soul to make as wide an appeal to the popular mind as one having body as well. And although such elusive delights as exist in Turner's latest works may prove ineffable charms for a fortunate few, the great mass of people would demand the studious attractions of form and draughtsmanship.

Form is the prose of the graphic arts, easily grasped by average intelligence. Colour is the poetry requiring a special bent of mind for its complete appreciation. Or to use another simile: form is equivalent to the words of a song and colour to its music. A wrong or an unfit word: a wrong fact or an awkwardness in drawing; these are apparent to all. But music and colour obey less obvious laws and can, for that reason, elude the criticism of all but experts.

If these generalisations are true they must point to this important fact: that the sum of universal requirements proves that form is of more importance in an art that is to be far-reaching than is colour, though it is not necessarily of more beauty.

The charms of colour are infinite, inexhaustible; for every temperament and every mood. Not only do individuals grow to the love of it, but nations do also. There seems to be evidence to prove that the development of the colour-sense has been most active in recent centuries: that in ancient Greece the sense of form reached a far higher level than did the colour-sense.

The life-history of colour appreciation in persons and nations both might be briefly stated in this way: first a fascination is felt in brilliant hues, whether harmonious or not. Next when sophistication sets in, and with it an assumption of taste and choice, the sombreness or reticence of colour is held to be a great charm; not because the love of brilliant colour has altogether gone perhaps, but because men (and particularly women) persuade themselves that refinement in taste is the equivalent of reticence. I have often remarked that the

young lady—art student perhaps—who is so much concerned about the precise tint of a piece of clothing or a flower that is “to go with” a certain hat and a certain hue of hair and complexion, gives herself much more bother than an artist with a highly developed colour-sense would do in the same case. He would probably see qualities and harmonies where she would be shocked, she being more the slave of prejudice than the master of colour nuances. The fear of being caught tripping drives this class of persons to a firm faith in accepted codes such as “this colour and that together are always lovely” and “this and that are always hideous.” These rules are as nothing to one who has an eye for colour. To this phase succeeds a more meagre and ascetic taste for greys and neutral tints, combined into “harmonies” wherein a bright note of colour may only be tolerated as a small spot. This phase in its turn gives way gradually to a feeling for inner and broken tints and opalescence; and a love of prismatic hues may be the last stage of all; except where decadence follows with disorderly and unrelated tints, clanging and buzzing here and sinking into mud there. It has been left to the enlightened twentieth century to produce, foster and pretend to admire such decadence under the specious recommendation of newly-invented names.

But with regard to these several phases, there has been in some countries—Germany notably—a period when colour of any sort was held to be undesirable. It was in fact entirely eliminated from the practice of art by the classical revival in the early part of the nineteenth century. Colour was then held to be derogatory to the dignity and sublimity of pure form as displayed in the statues of antiquity.

All these fashions may pass through Time's stages; but the rarest colour-sense of all is not often found in the beaten track. It is rarely we find the colour which is rich and yet qualified; boldly glowing yet unlicentious—such colour, in fact, as Turner gave us in “Ulysses deriding Polyphemus.”

VIII

COMPOSITION

Ideas of composition lacking in beginners—Primitive ideas—Symmetrical and unsymmetrical design—Symmetry of early religious paintings—Sassetta's "St. Francis"—Irregularity allied to naturalism—The votive idea—Blending of styles—Symmetry in naturalistic pictures—Turner's "Norham Castle" and Hobbema's "Avenue"—Examples of Boucher and Constable—Equality and contrast in objects—Mathematical proportion—Principles arising from association of idea—Geometrical principles—Golden rules and canons of taste—Value of space in pattern—Massing of items—Unity of interest—Composing lines—Radiation—Parallelism—Balance.

ONE of the most vital and important characteristics of a picture is its composition, which may be briefly defined as the arrangement of its parts. It is indeed of such importance that a spectator ignorant of its very name and oblivious of its place and presence in the technical scheme may yet be strongly influenced by the part it plays.

All this might of course be said of the other factors in a picture; but in the case of drawing, light and shade, and colour the spectator is faced with things upon which he can pronounce judgment out of his own observation. It is not possible however, for him to understand composition as such, unless he has been initiated. Therefore the fact that it can direct his preferences whilst he is unconscious of its influence, is proof of the power and importance of this branch of the science of art. Even students, in their early days, are seen to be hopelessly lacking in ideas of composition, and it is not until special study has been undertaken that they become able to list a few phrases in this most potent language.

Classes for composition alone are a feature of every art-school, and many are the tasks imposed and many the futile attempts before certainty and fluency are acquired. Strangely enough there seems to be no trace of these early difficulties in the artist of experience. Composition, to the practised painter, is a fascinating exercise, permitting such ample licence as to free it altogether from the irksomeness of a task imposed.

The two terms "composition" and "design" are often used loosely to signify the same thing; but in reality, the first embraces much less than does the other.

When the term "design" is applied to picture-making it connotes almost every process involved. It includes the very first inception of the subject as well as the final touches, and may perhaps be said to extend as far as the framing. Composition is but a part, although a very large part, of the procedure. The mental processes it involves are practically the same as those employed in the scheming of ornament, which is specifically known as "Design."

No human creature is without some elementary idea of placing objects in such relation to each other as to afford him amusement or contentment. The child who plays with a heap of pebbles will probably start by making a row of them. The savage, when he has erected his stock or stone will proceed to put others by its side. The row of objects charms both child and savage. That the arrangement is considered a beautiful one finds proof in the fact that primitive utensils and tools are ornamented with rows of notches or other markings.

The arrangement is varied and elaborated in a second and higher stage of thought. The child uses a larger

stone at intervals along his row: the savage varies the length and character of his notches. His biggest stone, which perhaps serves him in the character of a fetish, will have a smaller stone set on each side of it. That implies a much more significant relation of parts. The row idea is still there, but added to it is the idea of a chief object and its satellites or supporters. They suggest homage and service.

This idea is in some respects a final one, for although it admits of infinite elaboration, variety, and complexity; yet it cannot be surpassed by any other idea of its own sort. Supremacy is supremacy; and whether it be that of a barbaric idol or the Christian Godhead its force is transcendent.

There are of course numerous other ideas in the planning of ornamental design which would occur even to the mind of a child; such for example, as the wave, the triangle and other forms based upon geometrical elements; but there are surprisingly few that leave no room for, or do not call for, the placing of one supreme point in their composition. The circle has its centre, the diagonals in a rectilinear shape cross and cause a point of interest— notions which prevail in all figures derived from these parent forms.

Thus from the very beginning, the psychological is bound up in the mathematical. Order and precedence are in fact the main springs of design, and symmetry is its earliest characteristic, notwithstanding the fact that through incompetence it may sometimes be a very unsymmetrical symmetry.

In advanced mental states symmetry is no longer

invariably adopted, because Nature has asserted herself, and her sweet and yielding departures from a rigid plan have already fascinated the artist.

Under the apparent licence of this style of irregular composition there is nevertheless a system of compensation and balance in the inter-relation of parts which is of greater and more subtle charm than the other style of rigid order. Thus it is that the naturalism of Japanese decorative art—its birds and flowers—eschews altogether anything in the nature of symmetry; whilst its frets and diapers, derived from earlier civilisations, are inexorably regular.

If the untutored person thinks at all about the pictures which meet his eye, he must be struck by one or two facts having reference to their various designs, even though, as we have surmised, he may not know that these facts are related to the science of composition, nor that they have anything at all to do with his own appraisement of works of art.

If he walks in a public gallery he may notice that the religious pictures of the early centuries are stiff and formal in their arrangement; and that modern landscapes and pictures of a secular nature are quite irregular in the disposition of their parts. To have arrived at such a classification is to have made the first and most momentous step towards the principles of composition.

Supposing our layman, as we have already called him, is above the average in thoughtfulness and enthusiasm in these matters, he will probably ask himself for reasons as to the facts he observes; and one of his first quests will be into the nature of this formality which the old



By permission of B. Benson, Esq. Stefano di Giovanni, called Sassetta

SAINT FRANCIS IN GLORY
(Settignano, Benson Collection)

The symmetrical design enforces the idea of glorification. A more naturalistic composition would admit mundane ideas.

altar-pieces present. Sassetta's " St. Francis in Glory " is a striking instance of this class of work.

It is impossible that, standing before them with an observant eye, he can fail to see that the characteristic of their design is symmetry. In most cases it would be possible to divide them down the middle, when the two halves would be almost identical, except as to right and left. There must be a reason for this. The painter of a work of this kind could never have supposed that he was reproducing a natural scene, since it is more than merely improbable that the Madonna or the Saint ever sat in real life upon a throne as has been so often depicted, set off by saints and angels symmetrically disposed around. This fact should certainly give the inquirer a clue to the explanation. Obviously, if these scenes are not intended to depict the Madonna or the Saint in real life then their motive could not have been a desire for realism. If now the spectator's mind reverts to the later pictures he will see that, on the other hand, the idea of realism appears to fit in well with the irregularity of their design, because living Nature is not formal to the eye, although symmetry and rhythm are in her deeply laid plans notwithstanding.

What then is the reason for the symmetry in the old altar-pieces? The inquiring mind seeks help from other cases having similar characteristics, and he finds that in all things that are designed to last throughout the ages; in all commemorative things; in pageantry; in affairs of men where a mighty one is exalted to receive homage and glory, there exists an orderly marshalling of things into undisputed and permanent places that results in symmetry over which the supreme one occupies an unchallenged place. How well did the old

painters understand that to dispose the elements of their pictures in a formal manner was to give them intensity and meaning, and utterly to cast out the accidental and arbitrary! So, when all was being arranged in some express order, it was naturally in deference to some dominating motive in the work. Such a motive could exist nowhere but in the supreme place where lateral duplication was impossible—that is, in the centre: the place of honour; and this arrangement has been in the idea of worship in art, throughout the ages, in the lands of the savage and of the civilised.

Early votive works are almost invariably in the full-face view; but there are many cases on record where the ideas of homage or deference are expressed in the manner of the profile. Of these the Egyptian and Assyrian reliefs plead their infancy in art, when the front view of figures was ill-understood except in “the round” as complete statuary; and when also the phenomena of perspective were unrecognised. The buildings raised by the ancients testify forcibly enough to a love of symmetry. Further exceptional cases may justify themselves upon other grounds, but it must be admitted that they lose a deep psychological force in renouncing the symmetrical plan.

The question now would naturally arise as to whether this symmetrical plan is likewise acceptable in pictures that are not votive in intent. It is undoubtedly possible to find numberless examples of composition which, although not positively having exactly balanced halves, possess nevertheless, a marked feeling of formal arrangement. Such works often bear the look of having been symmetrically schemed in the first place, and then so

modified, in those parts that match each other, as to bring in differences to soften the repetition of the counterparts.

This modification is, indeed, a path leading from severe symmetry into utter irregularity. By taking any position upon this path the artist can avail himself of just so much formality or just so much irregularity as his subject demands. According to his position between the two extremes he will be able to invoke more or less of either the naturalistic or the votive idea.

Within recent years the style of work opposed to the naturalistic has been known by the rather loosely applied name of "decorative." It is a term that does not at all fit the case, since all pictures should be decorative in one sense of the word, and in the other sense it is an indignity to a picture to regard it as a decoration of anything else.

The half-way position between the poles of natural and artificial composition has given rise to a principle in design which has been summed up in the phrase "similarity with a difference." It is chiefly used by designers of ornament, in which department the principle is proved to be a valuable one.

In naturalistic pictures, however, this principle should be most cautiously applied or the result will be confusing and mystifying to the spectator. When it is used with intelligence or warrantable fancy the symmetrical idea may have an impressive or a charming effect; but as the plan usually takes the form of an important mass placed in the centre of the design rather than a disposition of objects around an empty centre—which might

be equally symmetrical—the result must necessarily be that, as in the old altar-pieces, the particular object receives a special significance by reason of its special place in the composition. When one sees a figure thus centrally placed, it is impossible to miss the flourish-of-trumpets feeling it invokes. For this reason the resource is of the utmost value to painters of historical episodes and pageantry pictures. The idea is present even in some styles of portraiture.

It might be supposed that in the domain of landscape a strictly symmetrical arrangement would be well-nigh impossible: and so it is except where the artist has worked in a humorous or fanciful vein. But so far as a central mass is concerned many instances are to be found. Turner's "Norham Castle" immediately jumps to the mind, and Hobbema's "Avenue, Middelharnis" also; both too well known to need reproduction here. The adoption of this plan of composition by the artists of these well-known works, necessarily involved the idea with which the plan is associated. In Turner's case there can be no doubt whatever that the choice was deliberate, for it secured the glorification of the mass which he placed in the centre, namely the castle. But Turner's subtlety went even further than this. The dark mass of the castle gives the measure of the brightness of the sun which is hidden behind it. From that glorified spot the rays shoot out in perfect and impressive symmetry. They are as brilliant as the paper upon which the print is made will allow. Yet we know that behind those dark walls the sun himself should be even brighter still. Thus Turner has called up a sensation of brightness beyond the gamut of the actual print. The



Photo Mansell

AMINTAS AND SYLVIA
(Paris, Banque de France)

François Boucher

Owing to the symmetry of the design and the central position of the tree, that feature gains prominence at the expense of the figures.

castle gets the honour due to its supreme position and by its agency affords the sun a veritable apotheosis.

Since no such psychological advantage has been gained in the case of the Hobbema, there is less reason to think that the choice of the plan was deliberate in his case. In fact "The Avenue" might stand as an example of a formal treatment that serves no good purpose. That the middle third of the picture should be occupied by the trees, the heads of which form a central V shape only points to a most unsophisticated method of setting out a landscape. Indeed it would appear that the painter in his honest desire to give literally the objects of his view, placed himself in the middle of the road to do so, without any thought of composition at all. Possibly he chose this standpoint because it gave the most familiar aspect of the avenue.

It may fairly be assumed that a composition is not happy when formality, for which there is no call, is allowed to creep into it.

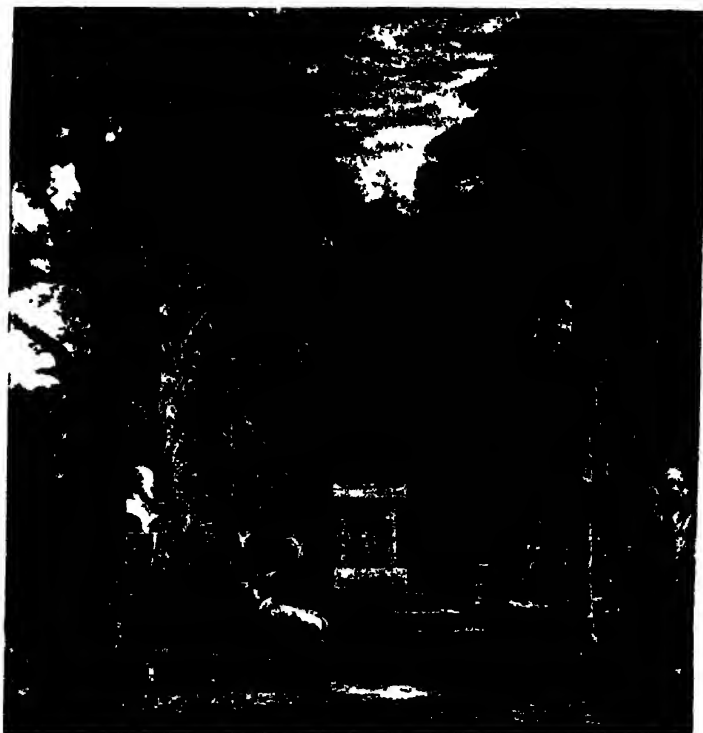
It may also be safely affirmed that landscapes which aim at naturalistic effect alone are, on the main, damaged by such a formal disposition of things as the chief mass in the centre, or masses of equal weight and shape at the sides.

Similarly, where it is desired to import into a work of art ideas of the monumental, the commemorative, the votive, or the mystic, it should be remembered that a naturalistic irregularity in composition may strike a wrong note.

These points may be illustrated by two more pictures that occur to the mind. In Boucher's "Amintas and Sylvia" (Banque de France, Paris) it will be seen that

the tree takes undoubted precedence of the figures because it has been placed in the position of honour which the figures alone should enjoy. Moreover it is itself remarkably symmetrical in design. The result is that one looks and looks at the tree with an unsatisfied wonder, failing to understand why it has grown in that curious form. In fact the picture, such as it is, is the picture of a curious tree rather than of an antique tale. There is one extenuating circumstance in this formal arrangement, which is that the work is frankly decorative, the episode being a mere peg upon which to hang a pretty design. Judged from a naturalistic standpoint it would fall hopelessly short.

The other point is illustrated by Constable's "Cenotaph" in the National Gallery. Here, in the very subject of the work, we have our first principle borne out. The monument, which Sir George Beaumont erected to the memory of Sir Joshua Reynolds, is flanked by two stone pedestals surmounted by busts of Raphael and Michelangelo. These three objects, although they would have borne representation from any other point of view are nevertheless disposed in a formal manner by Constable in whose mind the principle I have advanced was evidently present. He did wisely, for he showed us unmistakably by this arrangement that he also was actuated by the commemorative idea which prompted Sir George Beaumont. Had any other more pictorial point of view been adopted there would have been nothing to show that the artist wished us to share the reverent feelings which the monument should invoke, and the "Cenotaph," for all we could tell of Constable's feelings, might have had no more psychological import than would a view of accidental stones.



Cassell & Co., Ltd.

John Constable

THE CENOTAPH
(National Gallery)

The design shows the gun to the main object in its elegant central position, the style securing naturalism by breaking formal symmetry.

The four examples adduced bear witness to the force of these two great principles which attract the artist in different directions. They neutralise each other at some spot upon that pathway to which we have alluded, whence he must look forward and backward as he works. He has therefore a double obligation, the result of which is that in symmetrical design he covers or modifies the aggressiveness of formality—a thing scarcely felt by the primitives—by introducing matter in an unsymmetrical way as Constable introduced the stag in the “*Cenotaph*.” This is the irresistible step in favour of naturalism. It lifts the picture to a higher level than the merely decorative.

The theory of there being one supreme object in a group, as instanced in the early votive pictures, in the “*Cenotaph*” and in the temple arrangements of primitive man, hold good for another fact regarding formality in composition. For it would appear that, in the ordinary way, human sympathies are not aroused when the conditions of things are equally distributed. The mind loves contrast. The great in relation to the small is a combination of unfailing interest. Two or three things of uniformity do not appear to have any interesting relation to each other.

Thus if we find in a landscape two or three trees of equal character and at equal distances from given points or from each other, we do not care to paint them so, but we alter them so that their conditions may not be samely but contrasting.

The reader may at this point enquire whether there is no interesting relation amongst trees that form an avenue, supposing them to be as equal as man can make

them. The answer is yes; but the interest is of a different sort. Because nature is variable, there is little likelihood of finding a great many objects of marked similarity. Their differences are a less interesting fact than the rare occurrence of their similarity would be. It is for this reason that avenues are desired and fabricated. In the same way the artificial relation of a line of soldiers, or a row of palings may interest; whilst if men in a state of nature were sized up and went about as soldiers do, (terrible thought!) we should be better pleased in separating and contrasting them. Insomuch as their parade array is natural to them, in a way, so it becomes amusing to find a big and a little soldier together.

There is a very well-known and well-understood rule in picture-making which the theory stated above would, if extended, be found to support. It is, that of all the points of interest occurring in a picture, one alone should be paramount. In simple pictorial schemes there is not much danger of its being broken; but in extensive works there is every danger. It is chiefly on this account that elaborate and crowded works such as those by Frith, or the historical compositions of past generations, are frequently found to be tedious. The spectator in transferring his attention from one point of interest to another, without feeling any anchorage for his observation, misses the calm which best induces the appreciative spirit.

But it is not in elaborate figure compositions alone that the fault of sameness may arise. A simple landscape, if it contained the two equal trees we have already presupposed, would cause the same repelling embarrassment; unless, indeed, the trees were close enough

together to form one mass instead of two, in accordance with another rule soon to be stated.

We have seen that naturalism is opposed to regularity. We may be allowed to take the obvious further step and say that conventionalism is opposed to irregularity. Man's brain and hand are mathematical in method, and man has to go deliberately out of his way to simulate nature. Should he have to divide a thing into parts, his first idea is to divide it mathematically; for, with no call to do otherwise, that seems to him the proper way. He can succeed nowadays to a hair's-breadth with the aid of machinery; but of old, when his hand took risks, his work was sufficiently unmathematical to arouse the sympathies of his fellows. It partook of the principle of similarity with a difference. Nature herself makes her best effects that way. Her plans are mathematical enough; but she is so kind a mother that she allows her children licence. Plants do not grow as if under glass. Crystals are full of faults. Every face is like its neighbour in plan, but vastly different in the eyes of lovers and parents.

We cannot then expect that in things that are concerned with nature mathematical proportions will have any æsthetic value. We admire them in such proper places as a tessellated pavement. In a picture, which calls us to the beauties of nature, our æsthetic instincts will have a shock at finding the parts mathematically divided. A horizon should therefore not come exactly half way up the height of a composition, as in Fig. 3. Lateral and vertical divisions are feeble artistically, whatever they may be mathematically. When it comes

to both in one picture, as in Fig. 4, the quartering arrangement is insupportable.

The principles here enunciated give rise to certain laws; but it is difficult to see anything further that could be called a law applying to composition. Obviously all pictorial design must first fall into one or the other of these classifications; the symmetrical or the unsymmetrical. There can be no third kind, except it be a mixture of both, which would only confirm their standing.



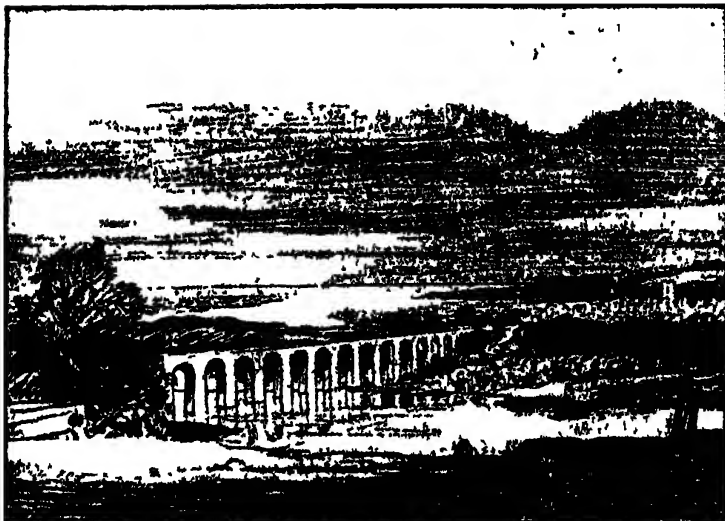
FIG. 3. Showing the undesirable effect of equal division horizontally.

A further classification would include lesser principles such as those of the horizontal and the vertical; the



FIG. 4. Showing the undesirable effect of equal divisions horizontally and vertically.

scattered and the clustered disposition of the leading forms, and so forth. These would also maintain their



An example of horizontality, invoking a placid mood.

own laws. They, equally with the two greater principles of symmetry and irregularity, are the outcome of association of ideas. A picture that is largely composed of horizontal lines invokes in the beholder ideas of quiescence—of the static. One that displays vertical lines will suggest growth, aspiration and all upward tendencies—the dynamic. A scattered composition gives sensations of disturbance and disorder, whilst a design having its elements clustered together will suggest strength, as already pointed out.

All such matters are psychological in their bearing, and the value they have in the composition of pictures is due entirely to their power of calling up in men's minds the elemental principles which they stand for. The persistent forms assumed by the forces of nature have become the symbols of those forces. The good



An example of verticality, invoking an alert mood

artist knows them and uses them; but they have nothing to do with beauty in the abstract.

In former years one heard much of various kinds of composition, such as the pyramidal and other geometrically derived styles; and these were held to embody laws. It is to be doubted whether anybody ever grasped the application of those laws, or knew either how to keep or to break them. For it is difficult to see what emotion can be touched or what æsthetic sensitiveness excited by the massing of pictorial incidents in the form of a pyramid.

Whatever value there may be in geometrical bases of design for pictures, can only be derived from some association of idea, as already pointed out. Æsthetically they count for nothing. Almost any picture, good or bad, will reveal, upon patient scrutiny, a more or less

geometrical disposition of its elements, and it is usually accidental in origin. Where it is intentional the pictures are usually unfortunate. Certainly there is nothing binding or obligatory about the use of them.

All rules beyond those of the great principles dealt with above would seem upon a little consideration to have come into being as the outcome of individual temperament. From the very dawn of painting men have used various resources whereby to express themselves. These resources, handed down the ages, here modified, there amplified, sometimes rejected, but always added to, have, in the long run, amounted to an astounding mass of traditional formulæ—an inexhaustible stock of the fruits of experience, available for every painter. There is no law about it except the laws of the artist's own standard of taste.

Nevertheless, students of art seem always to be seeking for golden rules of composition, as though a picture could be put together as a medicine is, from a prescription. The student may hear and read of line, mass, balance, repetition, radiation and all the other fine things that promise him so much; but unless he can feel within him the inner force of such things, they will prove only so many embarrassments to him. In the rich stores of the past he can see how men have used these resources; but he will find no rigid laws. What he will find are canons of taste which demand that, according to an artist's own imposed conditions, he is obliged either to have or to reject a line here, a mass there and so forth. In other words, whilst there is no law to say what he shall bring into his composition, there should



FIG. 5. Material available for a composition; but offering more than is required.

be canons in his own taste to assume control the moment something *is* brought in.

The fine tree mass that towers on one side of a picture by Turner or Claude is there according to a formula, not according to a law. If there were a law, it could be proved to have been broken as well as observed by those very artists and by others equally great. Turner made quite a large number of pictures having the sun, groups of trees, groups of shipping, and multifarious single objects of importance placed centrally, sometimes with exactness.

The placing of the chief mass of a landscape subject at one side of the picture is a formula that invariably gives satisfaction. Why it should do so is easily seen. Fig. 5 represents the available material from which a composition is to be made. If the mass were not at the side, it would be in the only other available place, namely the middle, as in Fig. 6; and that is where, according to



FIG. 6. A selection from Fig. 5, embodying two conflicting sky-spaces and pronounced centralisation.

our first principle, it could only satisfactorily be if it were intended to bear some special message. But such a condition is very rare in inanimate objects, and therefore generally speaking, the large mass is out of place in the centre of a naturalistic landscape.

A further reason against this unsatisfactory arrangement is that a central mass leaves the space remaining divided into two portions. These being about equal, and secondary in interest, have little pictorial value; whilst the central mass appears to fill up the design in such a way as to damage, if it does not prevent, the long swing of lines that is a desirable feature to secure.

The side mass, Fig. 7, usually results in only two divisions of the picture which is better, because simpler, than the three which come of a central mass. It also



FIG. 7. A better selection, securing simplicity in sky-space and a grander flow of line.

leaves a greater area of space, important enough to bear considerable pictorial significance, especially if it be devoted to sky, and it secures spaciousness and breadth.

A design that presents awkward or ugly forms is not likely to give pleasure even to the untutored person, for grace and harmony of line are felt even where they are not understood.

A useful way of avoiding ill-looking forms is to regard the design purely as so many masses and spaces, without thought for the moment of what the masses represent. The shapes can then be dealt with upon their merits. As a rule the noble form will give rise to a noble complementary space. This aspect of the composition of a work has been called its "pattern," the term being

borrowed presumably from the weaving of textiles in which the design shows simply as shapes upon a "ground."

Due consideration of this aspect of works of art brings forward the value of clear space in any kind of design. It is a sign of culture in the designer that he uses blank space as much or even more than the forms he invents. Crowded compositions are rarely strong ones. This is a truth most clearly evidenced in the domain of pure ornament. All nations in their barbaric epochs have been content to cover entirely the surfaces they decorated; and our figured wall-papers to-day are a survival of this savagery.

In pictorial art the principle holds equally well. There is often more suggestion in a space than there is in the forms that give rise to it. To the immature artistic mind, spaces are so much unfilled background: to the mature artistic mind the space is an eloquent and most precious part of the design. Of course this implies that the mature mind is itself full, by experience and observation, of the multitudinous delights that his imagination tells him exist in the space.

Nevertheless, this question of the pattern, like many another of great use, is frequently too much in evidence, especially in works of art that are known as "decorative." The "decorative compositions" that students are encouraged to make are oftentimes mere pattern in a couple of tones: a dark one for everything in the foreground and a light one for everything beyond. Teachers have been known to tell their students to start off with any meaningless blobs and spots by way of design until something good comes by chance, and then to work the shapes into objects of pictorial interest. This is starting

at the wrong end. When the pattern is thus made the primary concern the effort stands confessed, and the result, however quickly arrived at, must quickly pall.

In composition, the following may be regarded as a golden rule if nothing else may, that the chief object in the design should be placed boldly in its fitting place, and as little as possible added, so that space may minister to clear statement and importance. The inclusion of too much material is a great danger. The old masters were sadly guilty of it. Even Dürer, that great master of design, seemed to have a desire to fill up every corner. Profusion of matter is in itself a good thing under certain conditions, the chief one being that the profusion should not be distributed but massed or swept, as it were, into shapes and places in the picture so as to afford contrast to the other parts. Treated in this way, items and details do not assert themselves to the detriment of other pictorial claims. They tell not so much as a sprinkling of separate interests, but as the single interest of the mass they form.

An even distribution of the elements in a picture necessarily opposes unity of interest, which is one of the surest factors in success. A picture must have something to say, but it need not say too many things. It is not unusual to find painters whose aim is literal copying of nature, and who in the best faith, decline to compose or interfere in any way with the arrangement of things as they find them. When an idea, a motive, a theme—we may call it what we will—has been decided upon for the subject of a picture, it should forthwith have every chance that selection, composition, and treatment can give it.

If we offer the spectator a dozen incidents all of equal importance, he will be impressed by none. His attention refuses to divide itself up over, it may be, a house, a tree, a mountain, a stream, a horse, a cart, children playing, clouds lowering, birds flying, and so on, each of which clamours as loudly as another. Something must be allowed a first place. Supposing it to be upon the house where the interest should concentrate, then all the other items may be included if necessary, but they will take their place in such a way as not to detract the spectator's attention from the house.

This unity of interest may be secured by massing the different incidents as well as by eliminating them, which might be the plan first to occur to the mind. But to eliminate might be to impoverish the material from which both technical and psychological value could perhaps be drawn.

The principle applicable here is the same as that of simplicity in tonal effect, already dealt with in an earlier chapter. By the success which comes of massing or building up together a variety of objects, we are led to the conclusion that the ideas of unity and of distributed interests are entirely matters of locality: that it is the risk of making the eye rove that is at the bottom of the mischief in a scattered composition. It does not appear to matter how many items are included if they are crowded together in one spot, for they all show as one by reason of their similar position in the design, where they would in most cases also share the same tone.

Unity of subject acts as a powerful mental guide for the spectator and amounts to much the same thing as unity of idea. When the chief incident is simple, and severely given, as in the case of a solitary figure or a

single tree dominating a landscape, then the mental effect is swift and certain; but where complexity exists the effect will miscarry unless the principle of massing is resorted to.

All styles of composition and all the rules of picture-making can be made to serve this important end, unity of interest. Given a motive or theme, lines may be made to lead the eye to it; masses to support it; repetition to enforce it; gradation to lead up to it; contrast to enhance it, and so on in endless resource.

Even when the theme is a complex one, it may assume something of simplicity by having its parts well marshalled rather than piled aimlessly together in a heap. The great incident may take a distinct shape, such as a crescent, for example; and this comes about by the principle known as composition of line. Watteau's "Embarking for Cythera" is a notable instance.

To the uninitiated, or the budding student, it is almost hopeless to talk of composing lines. They look for lines like railways on a map. It takes years for them to see that items of any sort may "form up," as soldiers say, into lines upon a picture, and thus give it a backbone, a coherence which it might otherwise lack.

We accept with unruffled satisfaction a chain disposed as a chain, whilst we should feel something of discontent if the links were all separate and lying unrelated to each other. This must be due to the preference in the mind already referred to for order before chaos. If the elements of a picture are simply sprinkled, so to speak, having no linear relation to each other, the result, though it may be satisfactory as a mere record of things as they occur in nature, will not have that inter-relation of

parts that delights as a perfect piece of mechanism delights for the same reason, whilst a scrap-heap of iron leaves us unmoved. That perhaps is in the nature of a law; but there are no laws as to what direction lines should take. On those matters the artist takes his choice with full responsibilities.

The beauty and variety of the principle of radiation take a foremost place both in regular and irregular compositions. The rays of the sun, the points of a star, the fingers of a hand, the offshoots of vegetable growth, the ribs of shells, the falling of drapery-folds from a point of attachment, the contours of some forms of vessels; these are among the first objects which impress the mind with the principle of radiation.

In pictorial art it is ever present. The lines of a foreground depend almost entirely upon it. Very obviously so in such cases as roads and ruts and railway lines that stretch into the distance. There we can see that the beauty of the principle is allied to that of gradation; for the space between radiating lines has a gradual widening or narrowing, and it is there where beauty lurks. When the lines are curved a further delight is added.

But the system can be traced in less evident matters. In landscape the folds of the earth and the serried ranks of clouds partake of it; whilst perspective views of things manifest it unfailingly.

The sketch appended gives two systems of lines: one in the conformation of the ground and sky, and the other in the tree. Both these systems centralise near the bridge, which is the leading item in the landscape.

If the lines of a composition radiate, the point from



An example of radiation, showing two systems of lines both converging to one point.

which they flow gains much significance from the fact. The principle of radiation, like others already mentioned, affects us by reason of its association with natural phenomena. The rays which shoot from the sun imply the sun itself, which is greater than the rays. The spreading of atoms from a point of forcible impact, as when something is dropped into water, is an effect which points us to its cause, namely, the meeting of the thing and the water. From this arises the axiom that lines which radiate minister to the importance of the point from which radiation starts. In the language of the studio, such lines are said to "lead up to" the important thing. Turner in his great wisdom constantly availed himself of this principle. In many of his sunsets the rays of light and their play upon the clouds have received great attention and resource. He has made them as eloquent as possible, knowing that by implication the sun itself would yet be more important still,



An example of parallelism, whereby the lines have no intimate relation one to another, the result being one of dignity rather than feeling.

though he was powerless to make it so in actual fact. In the same way an incident may gain importance by a system of radiation in the disposal of other incidents round about it.

The opposite principle may be said to be parallelism. This, although it can boast of a noble severity, and is paramount in a frontal aspect of things in naturalistic art, belongs more usually to symmetrical composition. It is not a favourite device in naturalistic landscape chiefly, perhaps, for the reason that radiating lines by their greater charm are preferred before parallel ones.

The principle of Balance must not be overlooked for it is never missing from the works of the greatest artists. A look through Turner's *Liber Studiorum* will demonstrate the value of the part it plays in fine picture-making. I append a sketch of the "View of a Lake," one of the plates in the so-called Unpublished Plates. In this example it is easy to see how the trees on one



Sketch of Turner's "View of a Lake" (*Liber Studiorum*), exemplifying the principle of balance, or compensation, in the tree-groups.

side are balanced by those on the other with the S curve of the bank—a perfect symbol of balance—between them.

Balance ensures a compensation for anything in the way of composition that might look too partial or one-sided without some complementary factor. In fact, "Compensation" would be the better term for it, inasmuch as "balance" implies equality—a thing which would be fatal to any ordinary scheme. What is wanted is but a suggestion of recompense. When we employ balance it must be only of that sort which exists in impressions of the mind, and is too subtle to submit to measurement or calculation.

IX

REALISM AND IDEALISM

The methods described—Realism a method for " painting with a purpose "
 —Idealism betters and beautifies—Naturalism necessary to both—
 Literalism a subdivision of realism—Turner—Rossetti—Hunt and
 Millais compared—" Apollo killing the Python "—" The Scapegoat "
 —" The Hireling Shepherd "—" Strayed Sheep "—" The Blind Girl."

To come back again to our layman, we shall find that pictures will interest him in two different ways. On the one hand they may appeal to his eye and understanding as presentments of scenes that he knows; as incidents that might happen in his own life; or as reconstructions of historical episodes which convince him of their possibility. In each of these ways he will be able to confirm the outward and visible aspects of things by his own knowledge born of observation and experience. We shall find that his satisfaction in these matters is due to the painter's faithful, learned, and painstaking accuracy. Fabrics are painted to look as though the layman might handle them; trees that he could walk amongst; faces that all but speak, and so on. This absolute realism which almost deceives his five senses, is the outcome of every detail having been painted with learned draughtsmanship, in their correct tones; in faultless perspective and natural colour. Before works of this sort the spectator's pleasure is that of mere recognition.

On the other hand, if he has any responsiveness at all to the call of art he will also see pictures that arrest him in a different way. These will not appeal so much to

his intellect as to his most inward emotions; nor so much to his five senses as to his more numerous psychological faculties.

Here again then, are two manifestations of art which appear to be opposed. They are termed respectively "realistic" and "idealistic." Though they differ from each other, neither of them is opposed to naturalism. The ideal landscape will probably not be topographical; the ideal figure will probably not be a portrait. Both may, perchance, be incorrectly rendered in some aspects or details; but if they succeed in interesting the beholder because of some inner quality that touches his sensibilities and emotions, they establish a claim quite as great as does the realistic picture which convinces by the force of its correct representation.

The terms "idealistic" and "realistic" are used in criticism to signify two opposite methods of approach on the part of the artist. They cannot be applied to a classification of *pictures* without hopeless confusion. The idealist is one who gives form to incidents and scenes that have generated partly or wholly in his own mind. He may, and usually does, get the germ of his subject from something seen; but the material is gestated, so to speak, and the result appears with more generalisation and psychological import than its actual prototype possessed.

The realist on the other hand, either labours to give a likeness of actual incidents; or paints others with the particularity they would have if they were actually before him. If scenes so presented happen to be beautiful ones and lovingly executed the work may rise to a high position in fine art.

Turner would rank as a great idealist in landscape.

In figure work the opposing styles may be instanced by Watts on the ideal side, and Meissonier on the real. Sculpture offers Phidias and Donatello respectively. But the case cannot be left so simply stated, because the two phases are, in a manner, combined in the finest works of art.

It is evident that the idealist is really more in need of knowledge born of observation and study, than is the realist, since the former does not oblige himself to copy from nature; and were he, moreover, not realist enough to carry conviction, his idealism would be but futile and meaningless. The more thoroughly a Turner could know the realities of sunsets and thunderstorms, the more magnificent or appalling could he render them by invention. It is therefore by the naturalism which abides in realism that we get the power of communicating the spiritual or romantic forces of things which constitutes idealism in art. The realist also might imagine scenes; but he would present them in such a way that they might be mistaken for topographical records. Though they were beautiful examples of the painter's art there would be nothing idealistic in them.

The idealist says:—"I will paint you a picture of this commonplace street and you shall say that you never before felt how beautiful a place it was."

The realist says:—"I will paint you a view of the same street, and you shall think you are actually in it."

Let us grant the necessary full powers on the part of these two artists. Then, if the street be under a beautiful effect at the time the realist works, and if his temperament and methods be refined and capable of æsthetic feeling, the resulting picture must needs be a

beautiful one. If, on the other hand, the street be very squalid, ugly, grey, and grimy, and the effect negligible; then the realist's result will hold all these repellent characteristics. But the picture need not necessarily be an ugly one for all that. Art counts for something, and what might be nauseating in an actual scene becomes tolerable by being a step removed; for it will touch less practical and more poetical emotions in a picture than in reality. It cannot actually disgust when merely depicted although it may cause feelings of sorrow and pity; even horror. That is why realism is a favourite manner for those who "paint with a purpose": Hogarth, Verestchagin and others. The method allows of a plain unvarnished tale where occasion demands.

The idealist, feeling under no obligation to perpetuate repellent features, allows his imagination to better them. He thinks of the scene under a beautifying effect of light; he readjusts the proportions of its parts, and in other ways modifies the conditions presented by the scene to the physical eye. But he, no more than the realist, departs from *naturalism*, that is, from what *might be*.

Naturalism secures conviction to the spectator of a work of art. Without naturalism the spirit of the scene would be missed from the picture, and the spectator might repudiate the work as being no representation of the place or thing it claimed to depict.

But there is a third class of painter to be accounted for, who, though coming under the heading of realist should nevertheless be classed in a subdivision. This is the painter whose aim does not go beyond a positive copying of what is before him. His work is as faithful

a literal transcript as he can make it. He is therefore called a "literalist." He concerns himself with the body of things; not with the soul. If the soul comes in too, well and good; but he does not admit that it is any part of his aim to catch the soul.

The literalist differs from the realist in this respect, that the object of the latter is first and foremost to make things look real; not by slavishly copying from nature as the literalist does, but by using any artifice or resource to forward his object. He may secure more conviction by adopting general truths than by taking the particular truths offered by his natural model; or he may overstate a case here, and reject much matter there, in order to give point to effects too feebly shown in nature. In a word, he wishes that his public shall have no instant's doubt as to what he shows them.

The literalist on his part would regard it as an indiscretion thus to tamper with the fixed facts presented by nature. What he sees with his bodily eye is to him the highest truth. It is this that he reverences, and he is content with what it offers and takes it as it comes. In fact it might be said that he takes the ore of the truth he seeks, quartz and all. The realist crushes it to extract the gold. The idealist refines it and produces from it an object of beauty.

Rossetti was always an idealist, whilst Holman Hunt and Millais must be classed as literalists in their early years, since it was a point of principle with them never to paint anything for which they had not before them an actual authority. We know nevertheless that their pictures were full of an urgent poetical force. Their realism or literalism was but the language in which they chose to speak. The beauty of the subject-matter of

these works was a thing quite apart from the literal manner of their execution.

One would hesitate to affirm that either of the methods of painting discussed above is more truthful than another. Further, it must never be forgotten that this classification can apply to nothing more than the mere attitude of the artist towards his work. In no way whatever will it answer as a differentiation between pictures. The artist may be both realist and idealist at the same time. No one would deny that Turner, who is at the head of idealists, is in treating certain effects, any the less a realist. It has already been pointed out that his vast knowledge of the realities of nature came out in his idealistic work and made it convincing. To draw a hard and fast line between these two outlooks is practically impossible, since, in fact, they will not be separated, being both bound in naturalism.

As an example of this inseparability we may take Turner's "Apollo killing the Python": a picture which deals with a mythical god and a mythical beast set in a landscape which could not be identified with any spot upon earth—a truly "transcendental" work. Yet here are evidences of realism that surpass most efforts of a similar nature. To say nothing of the lair of the beast, which is convincing enough; nor of the calm mastery of the god, the death-throes of the python are a marvel of realistic presentment. The knotted writhing of its sinuous body, from which in one spot the entrails protrude through the break made by the arrow, is such as could only have been learnt from more mundane animals on a smaller scale. Many a worm-like dragon has been painted since, especially those

unfortunate companions of Andromeda; but how many of them make us feel the force and mighty power of the beast or the sublimity of his dying agonies?

So with regard to Holman Hunt. "The Scapegoat" is a work of absolute literalism, for which the artist made a pilgrimage to the Dead Sea and painted there the salt flats exactly as Meissonier would have painted them. The distressed goat is no less studied to a hair, and the filmy glaze over his dying eye must have been watched and delineated from the all but dead model. Yet can romance rise to greater heights, or feeling be more trenchant than in this transcendent work?

Again is it possible for literalism to go further than it does in his "Hireling Shepherd; or the Death's-head Moth," and yet be wedded to more idealism in its glow of colour and its touching human interest? It is worth while to note here that the realistic effect of the sun shining through the ears of the sheep in this work so charmed an admirer by its absolute literalism that he commissioned Hunt to paint a replica of the sheep by themselves, which was done in a beautiful little work called "Strayed Sheep."

Similarly we see that Millais' "Blind Girl," though a literal painting from the model, has been imbued by the artist with such charm of natural effect and such human pathos that our best and deepest sympathies are stirred, whilst our admiration for the enchanting scene with its rainbow rejoices us at the same time. This girl who sits and drinks in the sunlight that is upon her is unable herself to see the face of Nature made glorious by the effects of sun and rain and cloud and bow; but her own face made glorious is shown to us. All this is more than belongs to mere subject-matter, though there may be a

touch of sentiment in it. What catches at our hearts is the true and convincing presentment of the theme. Here it is as though the realist had said:—"I will paint you a blind girl sitting in the sun with a rainbow behind her, and I will do it in such a way that you shall both weep and laugh."

It is in this way that idealism, realism and even literalism go hand in hand along the path of naturalism.

X

NATURALISM

Naturalism and a picture's reputation—Styles lead to fashions—The Grand Style—Reformers and their obsessions—Time's verdicts—Taine's views—Beginners' lack of naturalism—Criticism by the uninitiated—The combination of art and nature—Instances cited—Raphael's "Miraculous Draught"—Art starved of naturalism—A decorative failure—The Photograph—Goethe's *Iphigenia*—Maeterlinck—Naturalism of poetic diction—Its analogy to art—Rodin's works—Superiority to naturalism a "pose"—Naturalism of caricature, and of Turner's latest works.

WE find that works of art vary very much in their modes of expression, and that they are subject to great differences of opinion. These two facts are related. Pictures are not judged by all the world as either good or bad. They are good to some and bad to others. This variability of opinion is due to the variability of the modes of expression in the pictures. The reputations of pictures follow these vicissitudes of public opinion through many generations, and those of the greatest reputation are naturally those which have enjoyed the greatest appeal to mankind throughout the ages. Wherein lies the secret of this greatest appeal? A reasoning enquiry will show that it does not lie in artistic feeling alone, nor in technical skill alone; but in something that must be added to those things. Artistic feeling is a thing of the emotions; technical skill is a thing of the intellect; the third is a thing of human experience—it is Naturalism.

Obviously the several methods employed by artists in exercising their artistic feeling and their technical

skill must give rise to as many preferences among critics; and it is no less obvious that such preferences result in fashions; and that these fashions again react upon the methods so as to establish certain monopolies of style.

It is not so easily recognised that the styles which have prevailed throughout the history of art have proved to be grooves along which art has at times run so easily as to lose that natural virility which makes for development, and which, in reality, accounts for the freshness and strength of all new movements. The art that runs in the groove of a fashion may be enjoying the best possible condition for the development of artistic feeling and technical skill, for those things find no obstacles in a smooth career; but as a groove is not a place for acquiring experience it follows that naturalism is the first thing to be lacking in art-fashions and conventions. That greatest of styles, which men know by the name of "the grand style," coming as it did by way of Michelangelo from the classic; gathering glory from the Venetians, and culminating in the free magnificence of Rubens, had the effect of swathing its lesser disciples in stately robes which impeded all progression of a natural kind and only enabled them to float helplessly upon the flood of certain well-cut channels. These passive movements upon a tide of convention are seen in the later and decadent specimens of the grand style, where they appear as mere formulæ, such as the exaggeration of physical development in figures; the adoption of a colossal scale; the conventional arrangements of thick cumbersome draperies; schemes of lighting that betray the high window; certain prescribed manners of composition, and so forth. It required a mighty revolution of naturalists to break down this

fashion; and Hogarth, by virtue of the Dutch *genre* painters, headed the column. But eventually the reformers themselves went into fashions of their own no less conventional. Art is full of instances where its methods have become obsessions. For example, those of the Pre-raphaelites were, with one or two inspired exceptions, just as far away from a happy combination of art and nature as were those of the debased grand style.

In our great picture galleries are enshrined the works which have outlived all fashionable appraisalment. They are there on the strength of Time's own verdict. That immortal worthy has juster, broader, clearer views than have the experts of the passing epochs. As a rule, the immediate expert view is directed towards technique and style. Often enough the expert has strongly partisan views of the great works in national collections. Every critic would like to undertake a fresh sorting-out. (Unfortunately he too often gets his chance.) Time alone is able to average the expert views of all ages. He throws them all into his melting-pot together with the preferences of the common populace, and the product is always right. Time's judgment is, in one respect, more like that of the man-in-the-street than that of the expert for it appraises naturalism; and it will be found that the greatest works possess this indispensable quality of the greatest art.

The French essayist Taine has said that the finest art is at once noble and popular. He instances the unpopularity of the later works of Michelangelo, particularly those of the Pauline Chapel, where he sees the master's

works overmastered by supreme technical skill: triumphs of foreshortening and figure-drawing, filling the mind with admiration, but leaving no room for the touch of conviction which should reach the heart. Such conviction is only reached through naturalism.

To step down from the level of Michael Angelo and tread upon our own ground is to find these truths in greater force. Since all painters are students it is to be expected that what shortcomings they suffer from will be found at their extreme in the efforts of budding tyros; and it is a fact that we do find beginners in pictorial art most apt to betray a lack of naturalism. The youth and inexperience of the student are obviously causes of his non-acquaintance with life and nature. His observation has not accumulated, and such as he has is immature. The funded observation of any aged peasant would usually surpass it. The student is for mastering first principles and for concentrating his energies upon the acquirement of technical skill. As a result, his compositions may represent figures doing things which in the eyes of the aged peasant aforesaid are immediately damned as impossible; whilst a like verdict may fit the lie of the land and the effect of light upon it in the domain of landscape. The history of art teems with anecdotes of such criticism advanced even against the works of artists of fame. That these critics may be at the same time lost to the æsthetic beauties of the works they assail, does not stultify their judgment. It is the artistic prig alone, who shelters behind such a condition of his critic. He avers that the opinion of the man upon whom æsthetic qualities are *not* lost is the one by which the painter should abide. That idea is a rock whereon art has too often struck. Inspiration is impossible to a

painter who will concern himself no further than with formulæ already familiar to his peers; who will waive aside the reasonable application of such formulæ to life and nature. Technical excellence is a narrow path which has been raced over myriads of times, and conquests in the æsthetic beauties of form and colour have been won again and again. The artist who has no other goal will be attempting only the repetition of successes made by his forerunners in art; and such repetitions are so numerous, and mankind has grown so accustomed to them that fresh essays in the same limited scope do but invoke expressions of boredom and resentment. But in such cases the touch of naturalism works magic. It converts what was the end into the means. Upon the wings of those æsthetic beauties Naturalism flies straight to human experience, there to call up a mood in the mind of the spectator, and that mood makes the picture live. When the digested and formulated impressions of an observant painter's mind are revealed they unfailingly win the endorsement of all who look upon his works, from the aged to the child. It is no disadvantage to such naturalism that it may be clothed in certain æsthetic qualities which are empty virtuosity when standing alone. On the contrary, that virtuosity extends the appeal to those who would turn away were its qualities missing.

The combination of beauty and naturalism is the key to lasting success in art. This the ages prove. A case here and there readily comes to the mind: the smile of "La Gioconda"; the wondering eyes of the Child in the Sistine Madonna; the smirk of Hals's "Cavalier" (unhappily hackneyed in these days); the poses and the simple earnestness of Millet's peasants; the awful

sublimity of existence in Michelangelo's finest sculptured figures. Works like these owe their place in the hearts of men more to their naturalism than to their technical qualities.

On the other hand one may instance such an ever-present stumbling-block to appreciation as the scale of the boats in the cartoon of "The Miraculous Draught of Fishes" attributed to Raphael. It is useless to say that such a trifle does not detract from the efficacy of the picture. Even when it is admitted that perhaps the fault ministers to the grandeur of the design, and may have been deliberately introduced for that express purpose, condonation is still impossible; for it is equally bad policy in art as in life to do ill that good may come of it. A supreme artist should have gained his fullest effect without puzzling all the world; and he could have done so by using naturalistic truths for his great ends which would then have been yet greater. We cannot assume that the designer of this cartoon—whoever he was—happened to be so ignorant of natural laws as not to be aware of his error. We must believe the anomaly to be intentional; but with lesser men, especially with the latter-day forced variety of artist, the lack of naturalism arises from an ignorance of, as well as a blindness to the obvious laws of nature.

In a healthy state of things that lack would eventually be filled by further effort and riper experience. But it happens that art is not healthy in all its members to-day. It is suffering from a malady which may be described as a paucity of popular interest, contracted by a too constant diet of the intellectual and the emotional to the exclusion of the natural as already defined. Art has been, and still is, starved of the

element which has the best affinity for popular interest. It has lost the faculty of assimilating naturalism with its other sustenants. From that it recoils, wrongly thinking it inimical to the best results. Decorative art, so called, is in the worst state of health. In that branch is seen the utmost in the way of natural impossibility and obvious absurdity. Those who pursue decorative art labour under the delusion that the natural and the decorative are necessarily opposed. Some supreme results of their ideas may be seen on the walls of a public building in the south of London. These works were undertaken with great ostentation of a public appeal; yet there is not one person of any grade of intelligence or temperament in the class for whose benefit they were done who does not laugh them to scorn. The reason is patent: they are without any suggestion of naturalism. There is no other reason.

In other branches besides the decorative the same ill-balance exists, but in nothing like so great a degree. Yet it is enough to turn the public away from artistic effort unmoved and indifferent.

The great solution of this mystery of ill-balance lies in the simple fact that it is much easier; requires far less skill and less emotion to produce works without naturalism than it does to produce works with it. Hence the rarity of the perfect combination. Hundreds of art students in this country are clever painters, and a large proportion of them have artistic feeling; nevertheless the perfect work of art is rare, whilst as common as roof-tiles are the futile yet accomplished things which give delight to nobody on earth.

A remarkable witness to the power of naturalism in

eliciting interest; in striking answering chords from human experience, is the photograph. An average good straightforward photograph presents not a moment's puzzle to the spectator. People like photographs not because they are artistic pictures—which they are not for the most part—but because they are almost entirely naturalism: of the lowest description, truly, being absolute literalism. To what is the far-reaching popularity of the photographic picture-postcard due but to its power of attacking at once the recognition, the acquiescence, and the experience of the spectator, and all which those things stand for? I use this instance to enforce the argument that the human mind desires to see in pictures the things that it has learnt to recognise in life: it does not want to go through an inner process of persuasion or apology. The human mind has learnt to tell the shapes of things by the light which falls upon their surface: If pictures are presented with lights and shades which do not call up the images expected by the mind from other suggestions then the pictures have no interest. Watching a collector or other enthusiast enjoying the works he loves, we shall hear that his expressions of admiration are in this strain:—"How beautifully the light falls across those columns!" "How subtly those planes recede into the distance!" "What wonderful modelling lurks round the mouth!" Such expressions denote a revelling in naturalism. They are seldom invoked by passages which, though technically fine,, exist without natural occasion. Expedient or necessary as such passages may be in a work of art, they create no enthusiasm unless some possibility of naturalism, however slight, can justify them.

With regard to photographs it may be urged that naturalistic faults are rife enough. That is true. In matters of tone, I admit that the photograph is more often false than true to nature, and this is a drawback with those who better understand. But it is no serious matter to the less understanding spectator who occupies himself chiefly with the form of things. The man-in-the-street unconsciously makes allowances for such solecisms of tone as may happen to strike him, just as he makes allowances for the black or brown tint of the print which he accepts as differing from the actual colour of nature.

It is certainly true in a general way that, as Taine has pointed out, a cast from life is inferior to sculpture, and a criminal-court report to a tragedy or a drama. But this is a generalisation that is too broadly stated for application to particular instances. It is not because of the accurate reproduction of the cast and the report that they are inferior. Where such things are wanted at all they are useless if inaccurate. They are only inferior to sculpture and drama because they lack art; not because they possess truth. Given the proper occasion for the use of such realism for the ends of art, then nothing could be preferable.

Naturalism does not aim at deceptions. It simply engages human experiences as a key engages a lock. It is the complement of what every observant and sensitive person has gathered from an acquaintance with nature. It takes him by the straightest road from the picture to the mood of nature which is represented; but it cannot do so if it is mauled, battered, or distorted, for it cannot then fit or engage the spectator's consciousness.

Taine alludes to Goethe's tragedy of *Iphigenia* which was first written in prose and afterwards in poetry. In the latter medium it is said to have reached a higher level. Here it is quite gratuitously assumed that the phraseology of poetry is less naturalistic than that of prose. That is a bad case of the *non sequitur*. Prose of course would offer more opportunity for the absolute literalism of speech; but a drama goes deeper than words: it deals with emotions. The letter is mere vehicle: the spirit is the thing. Maeterlinck's characters speak like nobody on earth; but their emotions are common universal phenomena. In other words Maeterlinck is highly naturalistic although anything but literal or realistic.

This instance affords a fine analogy to minister to the discussion of this subject. The spirit must be true whether the letter is or not. Let the analogy be applied: We wish to catch a certain mood of nature in representing a tree in a landscape. We cannot catch that mood if we make the tree unlike a tree, or if we so falsify the light and shade as to create a solecism. But on the other hand, it will not advantage us to show every leaf of the tree, nor even perhaps to copy its shape exactly. All that we do is only required to be typical of nature, and the more we can force upon the spectator the inner spirit of the scene rather than the actual letter of the objects, the greater is our success. Then naturalism stands out purged from literalism, and so can deliver a simpler purer message.

There are truths which are comprehended by the mind rather than seen by the eye. They are in fact those greater truths, the relations of things; not the constructive detail of things. Thus in a fine tragedy the larger

truth of relation, that is to say, the passion, is respected although the actual dialogue may have anything but the realism we find in dialect stories. As a matter of fact, human speech, when under great stress of emotion, becomes, of itself, elevated and simple, approaching very nearly to poetic diction.

Rodin claims for his sculpture that it is naturalistic. Perhaps in one or two examples he has gone so far away from mere realism as to leave a few of his admirers behind, lost and bewildered; but in the majority of works, especially the more important ones, the great inspiration is easily seen to be naturalism. Rodin has said: "I do not invent: I rediscover." Apart from the early works like "The Age of Brass" which the Salon committee rejected, believing it to be a cast from life, so literal was its realism, there are examples which exercise a hypnotising force by reason of their strong naturalistic appeal — the "Cupid and Psyche" to mention but one. In such works there is no realism of detail and surface; but there is a realism of action, of gesture, of weight, balance, and all the dynamic forces which make sculpture living; and there is besides a psychological naturalism greater than any that has yet appeared in the statuary's art.

Naturalism escapes chiefly in the effort of the artist to be artistic—a praiseworthy motive in itself no doubt, but wrong in practice when it entails a sacrifice of naturalism. The saddening and dispiriting aspect of this practice however, is that the escape of naturalism is not always the result of excusable and remediable ignorance. A large proportion of cases are obviously

those where a "pose" of superiority to naturalism has set in. The pose is of the superior person who is determined not to do the things that would be readily understood by the people. To do so is held to be a step downward, because art is an esoteric thing stimulating only to the chosen few. Against such a theory it can be averred that whenever good art has been offered to the public, the public have risen to it. By good art is meant that which combines naturalistic truth with artistic beauty. It is true that some of the finest works of art are misunderstood by the people; but that is inevitable since the public includes all grades of intelligence. Certain works deal with truths that are above the ken of ordinary honest folk. They are the larger truths; those of the spirit rather than of the letter. But the turn will come for these works as for all art that leaves mere realism below in its reach after the greater naturalism. The difference between such works and the efforts of the *poseur* is, that the former are not false to nature, as the public will some day find; whereas the latter are not true to nature, as the public will always and for ever find.

To define the limits of naturalism is almost impossible; for it may be felt in every aspect of a picture. We have seen how it appeals in the literal and material details; as well as in the rarer manifestations of truth. It may exist in one of these and be absent from others. For example, there may be claims for it in the exhaustive delineation of surface details, such as we see in early work where the larger truths of life and movement have not as yet been apprehended. Or it may lay its claims to the correctness only of colour or tone or effect, where details of draughtsmanship are non-existent, as in the

last works of Turner. The great thing is that the particular aspect of a picture which possesses naturalism will be the aspect for which the picture is chiefly valued. Take as an instance the case of the caricature, the conventional form of which usually entails many falsities of form and proportion deliberately created. The success of the caricature does not depend upon these ridiculous departures from the real nature of the subject; nor even upon the exaggeration of certain peculiarities: the success depends upon the naturalism which the artist brings about by the employment of these departures from *literal* truth; for by them he forces upon the spectator the more elusive, vaguer truths, which perchance were never before perceived, or at least never distinctly noted. The spectator recognises and confirms these rarer truths when they are thus presented; the pleasure in the recognition by means of falsities so obvious creating the humorous charm which caricature possesses. Without naturalism in these elusive and vague facts the caricature would miss its objective and fail accordingly.

In a Van Eyck, in a Holbein, in a Van Heyden, the *obvious* naturalism is plentiful in the literal aspects of the work. This is why persons of poor critical power and slight sensitiveness to the more abstract truths can nevertheless find some sort of enjoyment in works of this class, however apathetic they may be towards others. The more responsive beholder sees beyond the material details to the spirit and larger truth, which, however, is none the less naturalistic or it would strike no answering chords from his experience.

Those romances in colour, the last works of Turner, are nugatory to many, even at this day. They have no *obvious* naturalism whatever; drawing and surface

details do not exist in them, which explains why the greater public sees nothing in them. To those who admire them, however, whose imagination helps their sight towards Turner's meaning, they have a most rare naturalism. Out of the dream-like nebulosity emerges a truth of effect and a beauty of colour which the mind accustomed to read nature, not as a map but as a poem, finds it easy to confirm. From the half-dreamt, half-imagined romances of personal experience, such a mind is able to draw confirmation and acquiescence, and to see eye to eye with Turner the golden landscape-romance he painted into these outwardly vague achievements. Inasmuch as they speak in a language which the beholder knows as the language of nature, exalted and poetic though the language be, the attribute of naturalism cannot be denied them. Their appeal widens day by day.

XI

MOOD AND FEELING

The terms described—Mood independent of skill; a psychological force—Emotion caused in the spectator by pictorial effect as in the artist by natural effect—More facilities for mood in landscape than in figure-work — Figures as pointers to romantic feeling — Rembrandt's "Cradle"—Millet inspired by figure; Boecklin by landscape—The works of both described.

To define the indescribable thing called "mood" is a difficult task; and perhaps there is no real need to make the attempt. It is the rarest and most valuable factor in a pictorial work of art, and where it exists the onlooker is fully conscious of it, for it is no technical matter unknown to the man-in-the-street; its secrets cannot be taught and learnt. It is the outcome of human feeling and therefore appeals strongly and directly to human feeling in all. The word "mood" is an excellent one, carrying its meaning with it; but other terms are used occasionally to express the same idea. "Voice" is often employed. In Germany the word "*Stimmung*" is used.

The terms used in the Fine Arts are unfortunately not well defined, and their arbitrary use occasions much beating about the bush of argument. Since there seems to be no fixed authority to which one might look for guidance, one is forced to use the terms as one best understands them. In these pages the words "feeling" and "mood" are used interchangeably. Not that I do not discern a difference between them however. "Feeling" I take to be a more general term than "mood." It embraces many physical and technical qualities in a

picture which appeal to the senses rather than to the emotions. We speak of a line being feelingly drawn, or of a passage of painting being nicely *felt*; by which we mean that the artist has had an appreciative joy in the performance of such parts, the signs of which joy we can read in the results. But the term is used also in a purely psychological sense.

In fact it may be allowed that *feeling* in a picture belongs particularly to a relationship between its human characters and the spectators; whilst *mood* belongs more to the remoter and more elusive relationships between depicted inanimate nature and the spectator.

This mood, message, or voice was held by the classic mind to characterise everything under the ægis of the Muses (of which *music* was once the adjective or generic term). Thus music, poetry, and the drama depend upon this eloquent quality in a work of art for their power of stirring the emotions. This the ancients evidently understood well.

In the twentieth century it is none the less indispensable. No work which is framed to make an appeal to the poetic faculties of mankind; to win his approval and delight, can do without it. Being quite independent of technical skill, it is not to be looked for in the pictures of accomplished painters alone; for it will often appear in a poorly executed work. What seems to be a necessary condition of securing this most desirable quality is that the artist should approach his subject with fervour and singleness of purpose, impelled by keen admiration. He must first hear in his own heart the voice of the subject, and inspired by that he must make his work of interpretation. He must be alone with Nature in a solemn

intimacy. Only in this way can his soul, replete with enthusiasm, hand on the magic message that will arrest the hearts of all who look upon his work.

The picture that is invented in response to calls from the market or as a bid for any sort of reputation, and which is consequently executed either by perfunctory or extravagant means, is not the one to win hearts or to live long.

It is *feeling* more than *doing* which is implied by the word *art*. "So-and-so may be a clever painter, but he is no artist" is a remark often made, and truly made. Art is only completely expressed when the material available to the artist's hand is re-formed, re-created, re-fused by what R. L. Stevenson called "the ardour of the blood" and what is known as the *divine afflatus*.

The mood or feeling of a picture is a psychological force. Just as a man's environment lifts or depresses his spirit; sets him singing or brooding: just as the sight of mountain peaks excites the climber to his feats, or the gentle shaded river wins the angler to his quiet pastime; just as the keen air, the brightening sky and the open road tempt the walker to his swinging tramps; or as the black and deadening frost under a snow-bound sky drives the shivering peasant within his cosy walls, so should the natural effects depicted by the sensitive artist go home to the feelings of those for whom he paints; not alone by the realistic simulation of scenes, but by the urgency of the human relations to such scenes. It is not the letter but the spirit which achieves this. For though a picture represent ever so successfully a sunlit orchard in bloom where children laugh and play; it is the mood of it alone which brings home to

our emotions what such things mean to us; or, in other cases, what storm and stress mean to us, or stillness and calm, or languid heat or deadening cold, or crags and ravines and their horror and mystery.

It must be evident that landscape affords the greatest facilities for the catching of a mood, but there is scope enough in other varieties of work. The habitations of men are a fruitful source; towns, castles or indeed anything that is congenial soil for romantic ideas. Figures do not seem to create a mood so well, because they call up definite and precise emotions, and what is wanted for a mood is something more vague and therefore more far-reaching. But they can succeed in this respect if they are strong types, or are spiritual or mystic as were those of Rossetti. Perhaps as ordinarily represented they are too like ourselves, and the familiarity proves antagonistic. They may help even if purely naturalistic, when they are represented as sharing with us the mood which their setting invokes. In such cases they are really in the position of spectators of the scene.

There have been periods in the history of art when figures of this kind were the unfailing accompaniment to romantic views. Wayfarers cowered before the storm; pilgrims heralded the rising sun; every dark tower had its Childe Rolande; every snow-storm its dying *Cigale*, or at least its old woman gathering sticks; every parched desert its Hagar and Ishmael; every peaceful evening its Darby and Joan at their cottage door; every shady lane its lovers at the stile.

Workers of the type of Sir John Gilbert in this country, and a whole school in Germany used, in this way, knights, monks, wayfarers and others depicted as



Albert

Montic on Schuylkill

THE SPIRIT OF THE MOUNTAINS

Munich, Sohack Gallery

Two people of romantic mood, both inspired by the action of character, the scene



Heckel, Munich

Top of Blackfoot

A ROCKY CHASM

Munich, Sohack Gallery

Two people of romantic mood, both inspired by the action of character, the scene

though influenced by their environment. The spectator of the picture naturally took his cue from these accessory figures, and was therefore under no mistake as to the mood the artist intended.

As landscape painting developed, such adventitious aid was found to be less and less necessary. Artists relied upon making the natural effect speak eloquently enough for itself. The greater the artist the less was it necessary for him to borrow literary motive from within the bounds of romance.

It must be admitted that art reaches a higher level when figures which stand apart are not thus used as mere pointers to the effect intended; but are themselves an essential factor in the effect.

The wonderful work by Rembrandt called "The Cradle" which was exhibited at the Royal Academy in the winter of 1912 may be cited as an example of the way the master could produce an immortal work from simple and homely materials and effects which he himself had seen and felt. I regret that it has not been possible to furnish a reproduction. The motive of this picture is certainly not the cradle, nor the young woman reading, nor the old one who rocks the cot by means of a rope attached: it is simply the play of light upon the walls and objects of the room. The picture relies for its appeal upon the true and unfaltering statement of natural fact, presented in such a way as to preserve to the full the mood such facts would create in an actual spectator of the scene. The inmates of the room are quite indifferent to the effect of light and shade which so commands the attention of all admirers. The women are represented as thoroughly accustomed to the meagre

illumination and the gloom it entails. As far as their action and expression are concerned they would have been equally in place in a lively scene flooded with sunlight. They are therefore not accessory figures, and it is not from them that we get any promptings of the mood. They are themselves part of the cause of it. The message of this masterly work is found in the doleful airiness and mystery of that chamber with its lurking abysmal shadows: points that are given with a force of effect and a subtlety of treatment which magnetise the spectator into feeling himself to be one of the group of watchers who are lit so eerily by the candle.

Two instances may be cited of masters who by the use of figures have secured the intensest of moods and feeling. These are J. F. Millet and Arnold Boecklin, the Swiss painter.

These men resemble each other in that their figures belong intimately to the landscapes in which they appear; both factors working together to create the mood. But the difference between these two painters is that Millet is inspired by the figure primarily, and Boecklin—in most cases—by the landscape.

Millet had an intense sympathy with the peasant, from which class he had sprung. He painted chiefly the peasantry of his own country. This would be proof, if we were not otherwise sure of the fact, that he was primarily inspired by their life and labour, their dignity, pathos, and quiet strength. But he painted them always at work in their natural environment, in the fields and woods, or in their yards and sheds, which proves also that landscape played a great part in the sum total of their mood.



Jean François Millet

THE HAY-BINDERS
(Paris Louvre)

In "The Angelus," he tells us, his idea was to make heard the sound of the bell, and this he achieved, to some extent by the flat and open fields across which the sound floats on the air in the quiet sunny evening, as well as by the listening figures.

Notwithstanding this, it is from the figures in their classic movements and monumental poses that we gather the message in Millet's pictures; for they bring us more closely to the heart of the painter where we can learn all that he felt about his fellow workers and comrades.

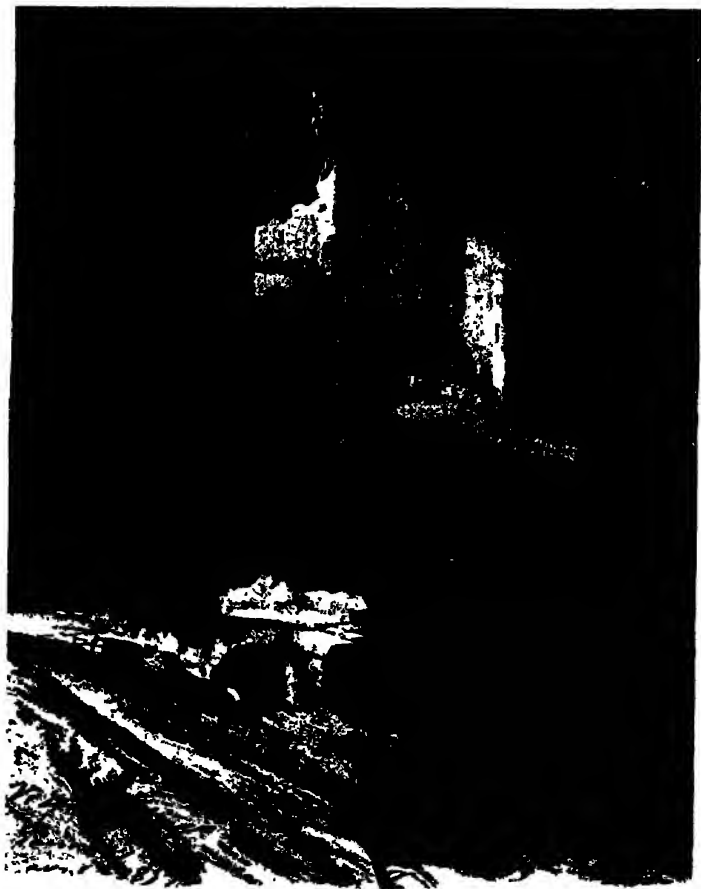
With Boecklin it was different. He was first inspired by the mood of the landscape, which he painted and peopled with figures, not to explain or point out the mood, in the manner of the romantic school alluded to above, but actually to complete it.

Boecklin was a romantic classicist. He saw noble valleys set with rocks and trees which spoke to him as they spoke to the ancients, and like them he peopled these things with nymphs, satyrs and other mythical beings. There are numerous pictures that show him to have departed very slightly from the landscape sketches upon which they were founded. An awe-inspiring cleft in towering rocks becomes to him the haunt of a prehistoric beast who lets down his pendulous head from his shelf-perched den to lick up the terrified human pigmies who scramble out of his reach. And so he painted it. Through a flowery meadow Flora herself passes, scattering blossoms. Nereids and tritons engage in hilarious romps in the merry sun-sparkling waves; and out from between the trunks of a primeval wood there stalks a wild-eyed unicorn who bears upon its back

an unimpassioned hamadryad. She expresses no excitement: it is an everyday concern with her; and in this fact lurks a part of the mood, for with us the thing is undreamt of. Her very nonchalance gives conviction. Her home, the mystic wood, gains thus a new significance.

Hundreds of such instances might be cited from the works of this powerful painter, the greatest and most individual romanticist of recent times. His strength lay in the force of his portrayal which carried perfect conviction. He was a true Greek. For him every rock, tree and river had its resident genius. No one has ever realised the beings of classical myth as Boecklin has done. They are not fairy-tale absurdities: they are convincing possibilities. His centaurs are not half gentlemen and half thoroughbreds: they are homogeneous, colossal, savage monsters. And how they fight!

Although Boecklin often uses figures for their own sake, there is reason to think that they are nevertheless the outcome of his passion for the moods of landscape. His romantic vision was a second sight to him, taking up the tale where his physical vision had to stop. What he saw in imagination he added to what he saw with his bodily eye; and so his figures, whether gentle and beautiful women and babes, or fearsome or laughable men and monsters, never step out of their proper place in the picture, but in perfect harmony with the idea, add marvel to mystery, symbol to allegory, horror to dread, laughter to gaiety, sorrow to gloom.



L'Art

Victor Marie Hugo

• A MEDIEVAL CASTLE

An instance of the romantic in its most obvious aspects.

XII

THE ROMANTIC AND THE PICTURESQUE

Hugo's "Mediæval Castles"—Derivation of the term "Romance"—Romanticism versus Classicism—The Claude tradition—Subjective and objective romance—The awe-inspiring—The mysterious—Vagueness and breadth—The unknown—The play of light—Elemental fear of darkness—Romance of comfort and light—Claude's "Narcissus"—Scenic effects—Genuine romance of Schwind—"Räbezahl"—Picturesqueness described—Human interest in the picturesque—The romantic and the picturesque compared—Piranesi—Rococo—Piranesi's influence—Amateur sketchers and the "bit"—The place of the picturesque in landscape—Ruins.

THE spirit of romance that is within all sensitive and imaginative people has much to do with the subjective creation of a mood in a picture; but there is naturally more appeal to that spirit where the subject-matter itself is frankly romantic. To make the meaning clear one of Victor Hugo's "Mediæval Castles" may be instanced. Hugo's mind was of exactly the type that would revel in this phase of pictorial art. A writer of unparalleled romances he was also a talented draughtsman able to seize every particle of the mood in the scenes which his fertile imagination conjured up. In this castle scene there are no supernumerary figures and no literary motive; but there is the specifically romantic material which is not found in the pure landscapes of romantic feeling treated of in the last chapter.

This specifically romantic material is largely a matter of selection of subject, which of course need not always present mediæval themes. Boecklin's pictures come very near to the standard, but they are more than romantic. They have the pure landscape mood, and

the term "romantic" seems hardly the right one to apply to them, possessing as they do so much of the real original classic feeling. On the other hand the word would fit perfectly the classic subjects of the renaissance, for theirs is a classicism born of the romanticists.

The linguistic derivation of the term is traceable to what was called the romance tongue, "a mixture of the language of the Franks with bad Latin," according to Percy. This writer explains that the songs of chivalry became the most popular compositions in that language and were known as romans or romaunts. From this point a very easy step is made to the modern meaning of the phrase *a romance* as applied to any tale dealing with marvellous adventure. This comes near to our acceptance of the term, in that it claims association with the passions and emotions stirred by the wonderful, by the unexpected, or by the unknown.

The other application of the term is observed in the domain of literature and art alike, wherein the word romantic stands for something quite specifically different from that which is understood by the word classic. In the middle of the eighteenth century in Germany the cult which bore the name of Romanticism argued a return from the classical renaissance in art to mediæval forms. A similar movement occurred in France after the fall of the Napoleonic empire, and was vigorously opposed to the sham classicism of the time.

To follow out this war of Romanticism *versus* Classicism, however, is beyond the occasion. Indeed, to do so, might lead to a serious mixing-up of ideas, inasmuch as it happens to be in examples of classical landscape art that the romantic element abounds. This little passing anomaly brings home to us the final wisdom of not trusting too

much to the tags and labels that become attached to things in the course of time.

Logically, the classic and the romantic are not strict contraries, and therefore it by no means follows that because the romantic can cast out the classic and stand firmly alone, that the classic can do the same on its part.

The pictures of Claude and his followers are classic in the limited meaning of the word, being attempts oftentimes to depict the scenery or local colour of the old heroic world, and to embellish the same with incidents drawn from pagan mythology; classic also in the sense of their belonging to an exclusive class wherein the traditions of classicism are observed although the subjects are of modern British and continental topography. Despite all this, these pictures stand high among landscapes old and new, in the matter of pure romantic feeling.

Imagine a wide view of mountainous country, wherein a crag rears its head above a sombre valley, dark with dense woods seen in a half-impenetrable twilight. A gleaming temple in the rosy amber light of the declining sun crowns the crag; and away, distance upon distance, lie hills beyond hills, and gleaming winding rivers that lose themselves in the mystery and the sky-tint of infinity. Over all, quiet and peace. A stately stone pine, towering in dark, rich, and transparent hues above all, invades alone the virginity of the warm and placid sky.

Such is a typical classical landscape, and such are the elements that nourish the subjective romantic faculty in us as we gaze upon it. Where a work is only objectively romantic, that is to say, where the paraphernalia

of romance is paraded without any consequent touching of our emotions, the result, in this respect at least, is failure, for the mood or feeling is lacking.

The truly romantic picture should call up ulterior and inner images in our understanding. It should not only speak of hills and lakes, and valleys and trees, but it should present them as so many natural objects with a special mission, endowing them with an unwritten history that will arrest the spectator, and keep him, so to speak, spellbound. When that emotion comes in a broad flood and overwhelms us, its effect is like that of music—intoxicating and transporting. Affairs at hand fade out of consciousness, and instead we find ourselves in an environment that, it seems, has been ours in another life—a life of wonder, of opulence, of mystery, of twilight, and of silence always; where mighty trees wait to speak; where mountains lie as giants watching; where everything is vast and still, but not asleep; where death lurks, and unspoken love triumphs, and where miracles and marvels cause no surprise, because of our omniscience, for we hold the two ends of eternity. Every group of pebbles is a Stonehenge—every wayside thicket a primeval forest.

To attain to such fancies it is evident that the mind must be more or less in the condition of a stringed instrument of music ready tuned, to which the picture acts as plectrum. Therefore is it obvious that the romantic in art is largely subjective. Nevertheless, the plectrum must be present, or, to change the metaphor, the germ of these fancies must lie somewhere in the picture, before it can fructify in the mind, and in most cases it is scarcely more than a mere germ, a hint, which the responsive

mind of the truly artistic can always receive and expand.

In other cases, where the painter of a landscape has set out with the fixed intention of producing an obviously romantic picture, more specific ideas are, of course, aroused, because of the more definite language in which the work must necessarily speak. The result then is not entirely due to the dreamy and imaginative temperament of the onlooker, but is objective as well; although naturally the more responsive the spectator is, the more will the hints or the definite message of the artist swell that sum-total of delight in the mind which can catch us away from commonplace, and transport us to a poetical land of dreams.

It is this transportation that constitutes the romantic in landscape.

No doubt everyone has felt that "psychological moment," when it is "happier to be miserable than it is to be happy without being miserable." The man in the pit of a theatre thinks he is having his money's worth when he has to struggle with the lump in his throat which the melodramatic pathos and "the pity of it" call into evidence. He lays out himself to be played upon. Be he ever so stony-hearted, some spark of sympathy may be struck from his flinty mentalities.

On a higher plane the same spark of sympathy accounts for interesting sensations experienced before a work of art the theme of which may be of an unhappy sort. In pure landscape where no human interest exists, there may be certain suggestions of the weird, the frightful, the overawing, which engross our thoughts and carry our ideas away on wings of dreadful speculation; and yet we may be pleasurably interested, and much charmed with

a picture that could so magically work upon our feelings. Here then it is clear that what is awe-inspiring is an important feature in the Romantic.

Hand in hand with the awe-inspiring is the mysterious, because the mysterious is the *unknown*; and the possibilities of what is unknown have always an element of awe.

And in this connection we may place a technical factor—that of vagueness or breadth. Neither of these terms, however, exactly expresses the meaning intended; for vagueness may imply the disintegration of form, which is not here meant; and breadth may imply merely evenness of tone with much detail included. A word is wanted that will answer for that effect, so constant in nature, of clear-cut forms enclosing little or no detail—a purely scenic effect caused by the force of brilliant light behind certain features of a view. A picture so disposed may be light throughout, with middle distances no darker than is consistent with opalescent mauve tints; yet the very vacuity of those stretching planes of even tint will call up surmises. Realising the scene, and placing ourselves upon the earth that is there depicted, we ask, “What may not lie hidden in that mystery of distance?” Nothing in the universe is so sublime as the unknown. Facts, even those mighty facts of astronomy which the human mind cannot grasp, are petty in comparison with the potentialities of the unknown.

The play of light over objects might be added as another factor in the romantic. It seems frequently to transfigure insignificant objects and endow them with great romantic possibilities. No doubt if we were to

analyse this effect we should find that the shadow played its part in a perfect duet to produce the result. But primarily it is the light. Brilliant illumination is always exhilarating. Mark how the crowd before a great conflagration turns round in admiring surprise at the glorified aspect of erstwhile dull houses. After a large fire many years ago, the fact which seemed most to impress the spectators, in whose mouths the story was ever new, was not the loss of life and property, but the beautiful appearance of St. Paul's under the fierce illumination. There can be no doubt that it must have been truly beautiful and impressive; but perhaps not more so than it is any summer day under the direct sun rays. It was unusual and the eye of the crowd, being unaccustomed, was unjaded. Pictures also have that advantage over the constantly seen objects of daily life. Familiarity has not bred contempt; and if a flood of light be so cleverly represented as to call up sensations similar to those novel ones felt in watching a great fire; or men before a furnace; or even stage-folk under limelight; then that flood of light is decidedly another factor in the romantic influence of a work of art.

Perhaps even more powerful than absence of detail in light passages is the obscuring of it by loss of light. This involves mystery again; but the mystery comes this way with more sinister import; for what evil thing does not belong to darkness? What has set in motion all the sagas, folk-tales, legends, *märchen*, and kindred traditions that tell of gnomes, fairies, demons, sprites, ghosts and dragons? Nothing but the fear of darkness which terrorised our savage ancestors. They peopled every murky corner, and every starless night with as many

horrible possibilities as their ignorance would admit. Even to-day, the unlettered and the simple regard the fairy legend with the fascination of fearfulness. The child's tale that does not cause him to duck under the bed-clothes is of quite modern growth. As recently as the time of Hauff, Grimm, and Anderson the fearsome element is well-marked, and it grows stronger as we go back into history. Spenser, Dante, Malory, which of them does not deal with the devils of darkness? The thought brings us to the verge of the literary aspect of the romantic.

We must give credit to the fairy tales of our childhood for very much of that feeling for the marvellous and uncanny which fascinates us in the reading of romances ancient or modern. It is an heirloom of savagery. Hence it follows that the associations of such romances are within easy call when, in pictorial art, we come upon dark woods, impenetrable caverns, valleys in the shadow of night whilst yet the peaks are in sunshine; frowning castles threatening down from inaccessible heights, or rising from black and silent lakes beneath whose stagnant surfaces the dungeons lie. These elements of romance never fail to pierce down to those primitive misgivings which, barbarous as they are, remain uneradicated nevertheless in the most civilised materialist of to-day. Few prefer the churchyard at dead of night, in the lonely walk home, to the road lined with cheery windows.

Romantic literature is not entirely a bugbear, however, as we all know. There are sensations of comfort, sweetness, light and luxury. The gentle passion runs a course of smoothness sometimes, to the accompaniment of sweet music. Birds sing, shepherds pipe to each



Photo. *Manzoni*

Claude Lorraine (called Le Lorrain)

LANDSCAPE, WITH NARCISSUS AND ECHO
(National Gallery)

A fine example of the Classic or Italian style of landscape, possessing to the full the romantic mood of that style. It demonstrates that the 'mass' at the side affords space and pictorial value to the sky.

other on the answering hills while flocks slowly roam away in security. In ancient towns a picturesque life goes forward, where an occasional dark deed committed for love or gain is but the indispensable passing discord in a tide of harmony. The Roman church adds its glamour of architectural and ritualistic splendour threading the southern cities with processional banner and incense. The warm airs of the Orient never cease to envelop us in a drowsy spice-laden atmosphere wherein we hear those real and original romances, the songs of love in its every shade and manifestation. For it is to the Arabs that we owe the genesis of our own troubadours and the legacy of love-song bequeathed by those minstrels. In fact, as far as literary romance is concerned we may easily recognise that the ruling passion has played a greater part than has the fascination for the wonderful.

The painting by Claude of "Narcissus and Echo" in the National Gallery, is designed in that "grand style" for which the painter may be allowed a first place. It possesses all the advantages in the direction of romantic force which paintings in that manner have over the more literal transcripts of nature peculiar to other schools. Here is evidently that intention and purpose to lead the mind away into the bright and noble visions of the past. In that respect therefore it is objectively romantic; but by its own inherent grace and charm of lighting and of atmosphere; its simplicity of effect; its shaded recesses and its breadth of light, it secures also those subjective emotions of romance which may belong to works unromantic in design and subject. The first glance at this composition impresses us with a host of pleasurable sensations. At its mere shape and pattern, its

exquisitely tender and trenchantly strong tones melting and fusing in perfect harmony, our emotions at once begin to stir. Apart from the mythological interest, there are associations of mediævalism, its terror and grandeur, called up by the castle in the middle distance. These incidents are, of course, secondary in importance to the landscape as a whole; but they show very distinctly the artist's intention that his work should affect all our romantic subjectivity.

Works of this school have much of the scenic character. There is, however, little stigma attaching here, since it only amounts to a reversal of the relative positions of scene painting and romantic picture paintings. All that is best and most delightful in good scenic art is borrowed from the traditions of landscape art of this class. Obviously, the romantic element is not only in its proper place in scenic art, but is quite indispensable to it. That it should derive its finest exposition from the classic school of painting is a fact reflecting equal commendation upon both.

Moritz Schwind the Viennese painter approached his subjects in the manner that Boecklin has done, through landscape; although they were largely figure pictures. Schwind did for romantic mediævalism what Boecklin did for romantic classicism. Gnomes, elves and fairies were his creed; but as with Boecklin, they were simply the romantic expression of his feeling for landscape. There was no assumed archaic flavour about Schwind to give a hollow note to his romanticism as there has been among the mediæval subject painters of England. He was healthy and robust, and could, upon occasion, introduce the most modern costume into his

works without the sacrifice of a single grain of romantic feeling, as his delightful "Wedding Journey" shows. He thoroughly believed in his fairies, and as far as he himself was concerned they were creatures of his own day. It is for this reason that his works are fresh and naïve: free of the musty aroma of research and free also of archæological stain.

The "Rübezahl," or Spirit of the Mountain, shows how his feeling for woodland romance produces the exact figure for gnarled trunks, bosky vistas and rocky paths. This gentle, quaint, easy-going creature is positively in his element as he shambles down the hill. Pictorially, he and the trees play into each other's hands and thereby secure a reciprocal emphasis of the romantic note.

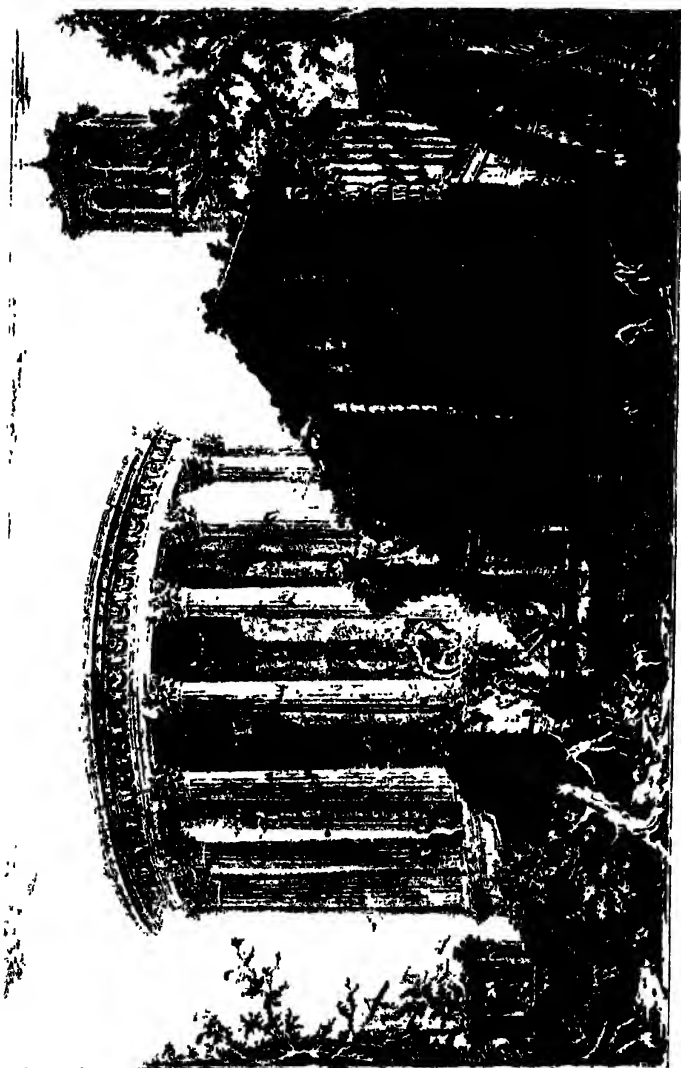
As its name implies, the quality known as the "picturesque" has long been associated by a large section of the public with objects considered worthy of being placed in a picture. What constitutes this quality is not definitely apparent, but it seems to include ruin and decay largely in its composition. When we consider ruin and decay we find that their characteristics are breakages, disintegration, and disorder of those things which are due to the hand of man; together with growth of vegetation, perhaps all the more luxuriant for being unattended, which Nature keeps ready as a veil for all things. In fact there can be no better type of the picturesque in landscape than an ivy-clad ruin.

It would appear therefore that when broken lines, fretted forms, and fantastic shapes dominate in any object, they being perhaps the essentials, the object will pass as being picturesque with the superficial picture-lover. The *châlets* of the Alps are considered

so, not because they are necessarily ruinous, but partly because they possess a varied outline due to broad eaves, jutting balconies, stone-weighted roofs and fretted balustrades. But there is something more. There is also a touch of human interest, which forms a connecting link between the romantic and the picturesque. The life of men lived among avalanches and frost adds a pathos and piquancy to the admiration of their little houses, which look so much like pretty toys nestling against the sides of the great and treacherous mountains which may cause their doom.

Human interest is certainly a factor in the picturesque. It has much to do with decay of all descriptions. The feelings evoked by a ruined habitation, are not those of regret for the building itself so much as sympathy with those who have lived, loved, laughed, and mourned within it, and who at the behest of Fate have gone their way. So in like manner there is sympathy with man when one sees his handiwork, his efforts to improve his conditions. The rustic arbour, the footbridge over the waterfall and similar objects invoke an idea of man in the midst of nature. Anything built for pleasure, or in the interests of domesticity in times of peace and happiness is a picturesque object. Grim things like prisons and castles cross the border-line into the romantic.

In romantic things we see that those characteristics of form which are essential to picturesqueness are less in evidence. A castle or a prison with its inexorably severe walls and its look of impregnability would never be picturesque until it became a ruin; its shape made fantastic by breaches, crooks and holes; grass, weeds, moss and lichens decking it with pretty patches; creeping plants overrunning its bareness and cropping out



Giambattista Piranesi

VIEW OF THE TEMPLE OF VESTA AT TIVOLI

A reproduction, much reduced, of an engraving. It reveals the artist's love for the picturesque, and his manner of dealing with a profusion of detail. Here the small features are massed to form one incident with the building immediately in the foreground.

like gay plumes from its turrets and embrasures. It does not follow, however, that as a ruin it would not be romantic.

That genius of the etching-needle Piranesi, was pre-eminently a lover of the picturesque. The remains of Rome as he saw them spoke little of their former glory of orderliness, symmetry and utility. They were in his day unheeded and pathetic objects of bygone magnificence, the support of luxuriant vegetation, the home of animal life wild and tame. He saw and felt their stirring mood; but architect though he was, he did not reconstruct them in his pictures. To a nature like his their ancient grandeur and fitness would have been less enthralling subject-matter than the pathos of their broken, tumbled and fantastic forms, fringed and tufted and plumed with vegetation.

As a cult, picturesqueness came into being in the time of Piranesi, finding expression in various ways, among others in the style of *Rococo* ornament, which was based upon the broken forms of rocks and shells (*rocaille coquille*). Some of Piranesi's etchings display this manner of design very freely. His influence upon design in general, upon architecture, furniture and book-embellishments particularly, was felt all over Europe and it is not too much to assume that many characteristics of the picturesque may be traced to his etchings which were very widely circulated.

So firmly has the idea become rooted that to this day the young lady amateur sketcher sallies forth to find "picturesque bits." Skeleton barns, deserted houses, ivy-clad towers: these are the things that are insepar-

ably associated with the smartly-bound sketch-book which bears its name in gold letters on the side. The habit of looking for this kind of subject has led those who practise sketching as an accomplishment, to sit down always before the "bit" rather than to turn attention to the open country where rolling plains, blue distances, and changeful skies hold almost all that is really inspiring in landscape. The "bit" is but still-life painting out of doors. Such side issues of prettiness diverted public attention in a measure, from true landscape throughout the nineteenth century, in spite of the great landscapists of the first part of that period. To-day, fortunately, a more liberal choice is displayed.

The picturesque is nevertheless perfectly legitimate in landscape when it can keep its place as an accessory. The Dutch and English Schools found endless artistic impulsion in windmills: those highly picturesque and rapidly passing features of the countryside. Whatever their shape they are always attractive, and since landscape so often demands a large object for the making of effect, it is difficult to see how a better could be found than a windmill. Trees, likewise are the better for picturesque shapes in their masses, so long as they do not lose simplicity and stateliness. The broken or torn tree, however, is no help unless it ministers to the mood to be invoked, when of course there is hardly a more eloquent thing available.

Buildings in complete ruin seldom serve a good artistic pictorial purpose. They are usually too fretted and "fussy" in shape for dignified composition. Castles and abbeys, especially the former, when established in noble positions are fine pictorial material before

they become skeletons. They are then distinctly romantic; but when they arrive at this "picturesque" stage they usually lack the breadth and solidity required to make them compose well.

The better public has at last outgrown the ivy-clad ruin by moonlight. This style of subject has now sunk to the level of the mother-of-pearl picture, mounted on crimson plush, which adorns the country cottage.

The picturesque will never entirely pass, for its principles are based upon true human feeling; but it must never again be allowed to obsess the whole picture-loving public.

XIII

LANDSCAPE

The recent development of landscape—Set tasks of early painters under the Roman Church—Netherlandish Protestant painters first attracted to nature—Feeling and freedom in landscape—Critical judgment of the uninitiated—Principles in landscape—The "way out"—A closed-in view—J. Linnell's "Arcadian Shepherds"—Scale—Aerial perspective—Tone-values of varying planes.

THE art of landscape painting shows a remarkable development during the latter centuries. From being a mere accessory of the figure painters it has grown to such importance as to reverse that order of things and claim the figure as its own accessory, or even to do without it altogether, secure in its own inherent power.

When man first began to paint pictures he was concerned principally with himself. His own life, its passions and its fortunes, and the mystery and fate that enveloped it, provided suggestions wide and engrossing enough. The church, when it claimed his powers in her service and thus put a value upon his work, prescribed his themes at the same time. He was to hold the Madonna and the Holy Child up to veneration; depict the saints and illustrate the miracles ascribed to them. The scriptures should supply him with narrative matter, whilst later, classical learning might afford him a few symbolic figures for decorative purposes.

All this meant, that the artist's mind became so filled with and restricted to this kind of diet, that for several centuries he had little time or opportunity for allowing his appetite to roam over fresh fields. He saw, of course, that the trees and skies were beautiful things and noted

the value of them as backgrounds to his saints and as settings to his narrative pieces and classical allegories; but he had not, generally speaking, arrived at the point where he was impelled by the influence of Nature upon him to go deliberately and look her in the face and to know her.

It was not until the Reformation had rendered ecclesiastical votive pictures no longer necessary that men in the Protestant Netherlands turned their minds to everyday nature.

Landscape for landscape's sake may be said to have begun in the seventeenth century. Van Goy  n was one of the first to put landscape upon an independent and dignified footing as a separate art; and since his time the love of nature has asserted itself everywhere. Everdingen, who was born in 1621, thought it worth while to go as far afield as Norway, a serious journey in those days, to indulge an enthusiasm for mountains and waterfalls. Painters now find more inducements in the contemplation of Nature than in the portrayal of human activities. The reason is obvious:

In a figure composition the characters must be represented with emotions of their own, which are therefore, from the beholder's point of view, objective emotions, as they would be in the characters of a stage play. We may laugh or sorrow with such personages, but their moods are not ours: we do but induce them in ourselves. This sympathy is undeniable; but it is of a different kind to the impersonal sympathy prompted by the moods of Nature. The latter are purely subjective; for the trees and clouds do not smile or weep as human characters do. The finer drawn sensibilities of the man of modern times have more affinity with these indefinite moods

suggested by the face of Nature than had the sensibilities of the average man of the past who needed painted smiles and tears to invoke his own.

Landscape is a living art, for Nature being inexhaustible can always offer new aspects and moods to tempt the painter to fresh efforts. The art has grown by sure steps, until to-day it is the most widely practised variety of all the arts. And the fact that it calls men out of the studio rather than into it, as all other varieties do, is an argument in favour of its robustness.

It is because landscape brings the painter closer to the heart of Nature that it arouses in him feelings and moods quite different from those of the figure painter or portraitist. A good landscapist is invariably a lover of the country and its broad skies. Gainsborough, Constable and Corot are typical of the class to whom Nature is a sweetheart to be wooed, loved, and worked for. The fascination is lasting for it springs from myriad sources. There is no working to prescribed themes or traditions in modern landscape. Even in so-called schools, one man's work is quite different from another, as Rousseau's is from Corot's. The endless variety in interpretation of Nature is due to differences of temperament among the painters. All kinds may find material that is suited to them, and originality of outlook is possible to all.

Thus it comes about that landscape has become the mother art in pictorial work, and some of the qualities that distinguish it such as atmosphere and naturalistic lighting are accepted as applying to-day to other branches also.

As to principles, however, it must be evident that what

is true of art generally is true of its particular branches: that what applies to landscape applies equally to figure work and still-life. Notwithstanding this, there are peculiarities in every branch which give rise to certain expedients specially fitted for particular work. One or two of these may be touched upon here; but the great matters in landscape, such as composition, the study of light, colour, and so forth, demand separate treatment upon their own merits.

There is one matter which does not belong to any of the principles of design or composition, but seems to derive its importance from a feeling in the spectator: the feeling or desire which everyone experiences to see beyond or have access beyond one's immediate confines. It has been called amongst artists the "way out." No view is quite happy that does not give a peep or vista of distance beyond the near planes of the picture. The distance is indeed of more worth than the foreground to a landscape, for a picture that has no planes beyond the middle distance lacks a great charm. Even in portraiture the wish to break through the background is clearly manifested, and the airiness and sense of space that result are the cause of the landscape-background so popular in full-length portraits. The same idea prevails in interior views where doors and windows are introduced to give life to designs that would otherwise be as dead as creatures without sight and respiration.

The sketch submitted here shows the closed-in appearance. Its confined area and its want of distant planes rob it of all sense of space, one of the distinguishing characteristics of fine landscape. As a set-off to this, I have made a very free sketch of John Linnell's



An example of a "closed-in" view, having no charm of retiring planes.

"Arcadian Shepherds," where the "way out" is perhaps the chief charm. Even this rough transcript will prove the argument.

This point reintroduces the question of scale. In a former chapter variation of scale was dealt with as a factor in attractiveness. It needs little persuasion to convince one that a view which includes the far as well as the near offers more to the imagination in suggestions of airiness and expanse—thus transporting the spectator more effectually—than does a view the furthest plane of which is a near thing confining the view.

The varying scale also supplies that contrast in the sizes of objects which, as already stated, makes for the bigness of even a small work.

This most essential quality in landscape of getting away into the distance is affected not only by composi-



A free sketch after John Linnell's "Arcadian Shepherds," showing the charm of a vista or "way out."

tion, but likewise by aerial perspective. It is impossible to realise spaciousness when the different planes of a picture are not detached. The eye should be able to go from point to point apprised of the successive stages of distance by the gradually lightening tone of the objects as well as by their diminution in scale.

It is a curious thing that so obvious a naturalistic requirement as this is overlooked by some who are excellent painters in other respects. Many old masters had the faculty, and many modern schools have discarded it. Amongst the latter may be mentioned the Pre-raphaelites, in whose works the planes rarely recede. Their followers frequently carry this defect to inexcusable lengths.

Aerial perspective and recession of planes is nevertheless a natural aspect of pictorial work always perceived and appreciated, though perhaps unconsciously, by the



An example of the tone-values of vertical and horizontal planes in a grey effect.

lay mind. Its appeal is immediate and complete. It is therefore the more surprising to see works exhibited in public galleries where attention to these matters has been deliberately withheld.

Another matter which one sees frequently overlooked in landscape in all mediums is a due appreciation of top light. Direct sunlight is so strong in effect that pictorialists cannot but take note of its results; but a gentle light falling from a grey sky is less clamorous in its demands and consequently it is as often as not, negligently treated. If the head is turned at a great angle from the normal, so that the scene can be viewed almost upside down, the relative tone-values speak more plainly to the jaded eye. It can then be seen how much higher in tone all horizontal planes are than vertical ones. It should be remembered that light is something like snow in the way it falls upon horizontal

planes passing the vertical ones, and affecting more or less the inclined planes according to their angle. The diagram represents a drawing board standing on its edge upon another which is laid flat. In a top light the side of the standing board is considerably in tone, whilst the

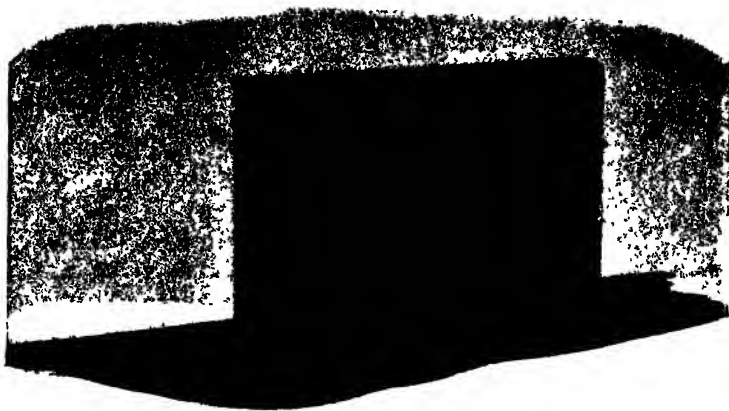


Diagram showing the illumination of a vertical and a horizontal plane under top lighting.

flat one is fairly light. The landscape sketch shows a bank of trees in a meadow. Both trees and grass were drawn in the sketch with the identical mixture of pigment used for the boards in the diagram. Where this principle is not observed there is a great loss of naturalistic effect.

XIV

IMPRESSIONISM

Development of colour due to landscape—Impressionism—Mr. H. A. Mummery's views—*Pleinairisme*—Manet and Constable—Colour *versus* chiaroscuro—New views of colour—*Pointillisme*—Its theory of decomposed light examined—Its relation to drawing—Form in colour as represented by Turner—Choice of subjects—Nebulus form—Want of solidity in *plein air* method—The colour-sense—Scientific art—Old and new colour-senses—Literalism in colour—The reformer's zeal—Evolutionary and revolutionary development of public vision—The Reign of Terror.

To landscape is due the modern development of colour. Turner and the experimenters since his day have taught men to see what before their time seems to have eluded the eyes of almost all painters; namely the varying qualities of light as it falls upon and around things or trembles in the air. This vision would have been a long time coming to art of other kinds had not the landscapists first detected it. Once the lesson was set it was quickly learnt, not only by landscape painters themselves but by figure painters also; so that to-day we see arresting and convincing effects of light and colour upon objects in interiors as well as in the open air.

This important advance has been due to two new styles called "Impressionism" and "*Pleinairisme*" which were publicly established by Manet in 1863; although Turner had already anticipated the principles of Impressionism in his later works.

The underlying principles of these styles are true and beautiful. In art and life they have opened windows to new visions. But the blind adoption and application of impressionistic methods of painting, regardless of

subject and occasion, is an empty affectation having most banal effects upon art and its appraisal by the great public. This assertion I shall endeavour to substantiate.

During the last fifty years there have been quite a number of new ways of seeing things in order to paint them, and for want of proper and definite names for these different ways they are all lumped together under the one general name of Impressionism. This loose and thoughtless use of the term is much to be regretted, for it leaves the general public with very hazy notions of what impressionism really is. But this is not the worst of it. There have been recent exhibitions of painted canvases, advertised as exhibitions of impressionism, which have been nothing of the kind; but simply collections of those vulgar trivialities which have already been called "post-impressionism." It is no wonder that confusion arises as to what the original term means. A lady once asked me whether I liked impressionism. It was so queer a question that the obvious answer seemed scarcely to fit it; but on inquiring further I found that she meant post-impressionism. Such a case is probably typical of the general ignorance on these matters. Confusion is worse confounded when adventurers apply to their quackeries the name that has won the highest position of respect amongst art-lovers.

Momentary impressionism is a method employed when the representation is of objects moving at so great a pace as to afford no chance whatever of prolonged observation. Such scenes include those of rapidly changing effects, of which Turner's "Rain, Steam and

Speed " is the crowning example. There the mutability of things is the real subject and the impressionistic vision alone can deal with it.

On the other hand it would seem quite unnecessary to depict a still-life group by such methods. A quiet scene with stationary objects and unchanging effects would offer no advantage to a momentary vision. An impressionistic view of a ballet is a justifiable thing: an impression of a still-life group is an absurdity, because such a view does not occur to people in the ordinary way; and further there are no beauties in such a subject that cannot be better rendered by methods entailing a steadier gaze. Portraits, when they are meant to be likenesses, call just as little for impressionistic treatment.

To put the matter in a nutshell: it is possible to represent the still wheels of a standing carriage perfectly well without recourse to impressionism; but when the wheels revolve there is no other than the impressionistic way. The old masters, who did not think it right to omit all spokes and to paint only the flash of light upon them—which they undoubtedly must have noted—never succeeded in getting an idea of motion. Their wheels were always dead still in spite of galloping horses. They were perfectly logical nevertheless, for they probably perceived the *reductio ad absurdum* that to paint wheels as they saw them in motion involved the obligation of painting the horses' legs in a similar manner and indeed anything else that moved rapidly enough. But recognising art as a convention they were prepared to leave cinematograph effects to the imagination of the spectator.

In these days we are given to talking much of the conventions of art; but at the same time we hunger and

thirst after the very remotest possibilities of realism. Perhaps that is inevitable; but the pity of it is that we sacrifice all the more stable, eloquent and beautiful qualities of art in order to capture this elusive realism by the medium of impressionism.

But there are also other methods of seeing and painting which are held to come under the heading of Impressionism, although many of them would be better classed as *Pleinairisme*.

In the first place it should be understood that impressionism and *pleinairisme* are two different things. The first aims at giving a synthetical view of the colour and lighting of objects in broad and general terms: a process which naturally precludes the possibility or necessity of representing details which the eye does not observe whilst engaged in this synthetical view. It was not an entirely new idea. Velasquez, in his later periods, had done much the same thing. He had put down precise records of the general tone-values of objects as he saw them, disregarding the analytical view as practised by the Dutch painters.

The eye in regarding objects analytically registers a set of facts quite different from those registered when it regards objects synthetically. This is the whole truth about the new and the old way of seeing things. Both are right. It is for the future to show whether these facts can be combined in the same picture. At present the impressionists aver that they cannot: but something must be allowed for the expulsive power of new theories.

In an address to students some time ago Mr. Horace A. Mummery delivered some very valuable remarks upon

Impressionism in Landscape, and with his permission I quote them here:—

“The movement bearing the name of Impressionism may be said to have begun with Turner. Wilson, who was his forerunner, was majestically broad, yet was not impressionistic in the sense that Turner was. Take, for instance, a typical example of Turner’s last manner, that beautiful picture, ‘Rain, Steam and Speed’; here is something that at the time of its production was absolutely new in art. The painter has chosen a subject which by the canons of art, at any rate then in force, is by no means inherently beautiful. The bridge, a straight, unfeeling piece of engineering, and the rushing train seem utterly out of place in a fair and ancient valley; but they are made the subject of a picture not for their own sake as being beautiful or lovable in themselves, but as the expression of an idea. It is the contrast of the new with the immeasurably old, the struggle of civilisation against the wild; and so the wind blows, but the train dashes on, its white steam drifting with the scud of rain. Then comes a flash of wandering sunshine, and lo! there is a poem! The lines of the metals and the parapets of the bridge are purposely ‘fuzzed’; and this by the hand that could draw the most difficult lines of coast and cape without hesitation or stumbling. To have drawn in ordinary fashion the trim bridge and mathematically true metals would have been to utterly miss the purpose of the picture and so the artist has softened the hard lines that we may not by realities be drawn away from the spirit of the scene. The treatment of the natural features is also of the broadest, because it is the storm that is essential; the storm pitted against speed.

“Though Turner treated in this impressionistic style some of the most perfect scenery in the world, quite unspoilt Nature; yet I regard impressionism as largely the outcome of modern life which has introduced so much that is unpictorial and ugly. But the common, the familiar, and the ugly are often by association beautiful and may be made pictorially so by a broad free treatment aided by the play of light and shade, and that airy veil of magic and mystery which is cast by Nature over the imperfect work of man.

“Impressionism is a legitimate way—perhaps the best and only way—of treating many modern subjects, such as cities, factories, and gasometers, which may become beautiful under certain effects, but are not inherently so. Modern buildings of the utilitarian order are only beautiful under effects that soften their rigid lines and disguise their forms. In this the artist can assist by judicious exaggeration or elimination.

“But there is a softness of edge resulting from the impressionistic view that is one of the worst features in modern art. Excessive hardness of edge limits the size of things and interferes with roundness; but when there is so much softness about there is a fusion in the masses which is very unpleasant. A melting edge here and there is very beautiful when warranted by nature, but in the foreground and well into the middle distance under most lightings, however delicate the differences in value may be, nature appears to the eye as a patchwork, each part of which is within its own limits. To imitate this without making the patches either too separate or too distinct is the problem of the artist.

“Impressionism to me seems the outcome of the rivalry

between form and colour. Colour disguises form. Impressionism is a colour process, seeking colour and the effect of colour even at the price of form.

"Then there is the mechanical reason for impressionism. It is only the freshly placed, untouched pigment, laid with a dash of the hand, that renders the 'tang' and freshness of the open air.

"To sum up, I regard impressionism as an attempt to portray the beauty of effect. This is expressed in painting by colour; in monochrome by chiaroscuro; and it is also a portrayal of motion whether in man or in nature. It is the capture of something which is not constant but lent only for a while. Some fine quality which a careful and finished representation of the object or scene would miss rather than realize which is to be striven for as *the* picture and seized whatever else be missed. To make a true impression is one of the most difficult problems in art; but, unfortunately, any duffer with a little practice can make sham ones. Impressionism is only possible to those whose experience enables them to distinguish between essentials and non-essentials. The sham variety is marked by the wholesale rejection of detail merely because it is detail. It is popular in the art school because of the facility with which it may be acquired. It is well to remember that not only are there many objects which are beautiful and interesting on account of their detail; but that everything must have detail enough to explain its construction, texture or nature. A near tree in any picture by Corot, however broadly painted, is always a leafy thing. The mystery of Turner's distance, however simple and big, contains the suggestion of fields, hedgerows, trees, and all that goes to make up the landscape."

Pleinairisme is the practice of painting in the open air. It certainly did not begin with the coining of the name, because artists have studied out of doors for centuries. But the *plein-air* school, Manet again at their head, awoke rather suddenly to the new out-of-door effects that the human eye had been gradually adjusting itself to; in spite of the fact that, in the practice of art, tradition had kept the old vision in its place unupplanted. Constable in England had already shaken the slumber of these traditions from his eyes; but he painted in a low key and preserved a stronger value of tones than did the later Frenchmen who pitched their tones very high and sacrificed tonal values to an effective and sometimes specious sensation of light by simply leaving out darks. They interpreted all their shades and nuances by differences of colour alone. To-day, some of the latest *pleinairistes* are using dark tones for the shadows in sunlight as Constable did.

Pleinairisme discovered that as a figure moves or bends it presents fresh planes and surfaces to the rays of light. These rays being differently coloured in accordance with the direction from which they come, impart their colour to the plane upon which they fall. Further, as this plane has already a colour of its own, called the local colour, there is a mixing or compromise between the two colours, creating a third. All this may be further complicated by other rays from adjacent sources, which, with constant shifting of the angles of incidence to the eye, as in the movements of leaves upon a tree, may set up yet more factors of variation and complexity. The *pleinairiste* and the impressionist also, do their best to represent all this. It is possible that their present successes will be less belauded in the future than they

are in some quarters to-day; even as the first attempts at perspective at which we now smile, were in their first days hailed as triumphant truths.

Nevertheless the most talented of these advanced schools of painters have now mastered the art of so adjusting their tints that a few dabs of paint placed upon a canvas and looked at from a little distance gives the spectator a vivid and highly realistic representation of objects that is not drawn or modelled at all, in the old meaning of those terms. The analytical method of old was to look first to the form by drawing and modelling, and then to paint the local colour of the object as it was known to be, shading it into light and dark according to the chiaroscuro of the model. This method is still retained by our decorative painters, who are opposed to the naturalistic results that the synthetical method produces. The various methods are as far apart as the poles; but there are aspects of truth enough to justify every one of them. Some may be diametrically opposed like boys round a giant-stride; but the post stands for truth round which they all circle on different sides. In this metaphorical circle impressionism and *pleinairisme* go side by side, hand in hand.

From being a new and inspired way of *viewing* things, impressionism as practised by many who lack the inspiration, has come to be a mere manner of *painting* things. It has lent itself very readily to this prostitution because its methods, even in the hands of its most talented exponents, have been free, and intolerant of the obligations imposed by past masters.

Pointillisme was one of these methods. It consisted in placing the paint on the canvas in little dots, by

dabs and "hatches." This plan took rise from a theory that to disintegrate a tint into its component primaries and apply these side by side would be to give greater vibration to the tint when it was being re-formed in the spectator's eye by the merging of the component patches at a distance. The theory proved groundless as might be expected. All that happened was that the colour went grey by such disintegration, and by portions of bare canvas showing between the dots. This greyness was no doubt an advantage in one way, since it gave homogeneity and atmospheric quality to tints that might have been too raucous without it. The *pointillistes* painted their dots as fiercely as they could and were well content when the kindly greyness made them tolerable. But they made the mistake of thinking that their colour owed its charm to some law of decomposed light. As a matter of fact the formation of secondary and tertiary colours by *pigments* comes about by means and under laws very different from those governing the projection of coloured *light*.

These questions are of such importance that some examination of them is justifiable here. A little unpictorial experiment quickly shows how far the theories that are advanced really come into the practice of the *pointillistes*. It will be found that an arrangement of interspersed dots of middle chrome and Antwerp blue, each of about half an inch in size, gives no appearance of green at close quarters. At the distance of 40 feet there may be a slight suggestion of green if the dots are out of focus; but this is, of course, infinitesimal and inconsiderable compared with the full and rich green that would result from a mixture of these primaries upon the palette. If the distant dots are sharply focussed by

binoculars the green sensation vanishes entirely. When we reduce them to between one-eighth to one-quarter of an inch a little more suggestion of a third tint is called up, especially with an arrangement of blue and red dots, which more readily yield their purple. But here again they require to be seen with some diffusion. No doubt smaller dots still would show further assimilation, until finally we should arrive at specks of colour like the woven threads of fabrics, which, as we know, do result in some sort of general colour; though not the bright hues that might be expected from the threads.

It would seem that the rays reflected from the scheme of dots mingle when not sharply focussed on the retina, and thus they are, in a slight measure, reported to the brain as they would be in the case of a mixed tint. Although chrome yellow and Antwerp blue, mixed together on the palette, are reported to the brain as green pigment, yet it is conceivable that a very high magnification would reveal the separate grains of the paint, especially if the colours had not been finely ground. The sharpened focus of the dots at 40 feet would be the equivalent of magnification in the mixed paint.

It seems essential then that the dots should be so small as to be indiscernible at the distance from which a picture should be viewed, otherwise they remain independent primaries instead of combining as a secondary. Rarely, if ever has one seen, a *pointilliste* picture carried out with the mechanical thoroughness that such a condition demands; and it is not to be wondered at that the laboriousness of the method places it beyond the human possibility of establishing the theory assumed. Even if the theory could be proved it

would be by such feeble and vague results as to be inadequate for serious, let alone for robust, painting.

The initial mistake in the theory, ingenious as it is, lies in the belief that dots of pigment could do what dots of light can do. An ideal instance of the latter is seen in the autochrome transparency, which owes its vivid and natural colouring to the assimilation of rays passing through microscopic starch-grains which have first been stained a particular red, green, and violet in accordance with what spectrum analysis of light requires. The colour of autochrome is thus seen by *transmitted* light; but the colour of paintings is seen by *reflected* light, except to a slight extent in water-colours of a thin and transparent nature. And besides this difference between light and pigment, there is the further one that the laws of tint-mixing are by no means alike in each case.

Every one knows that the pigment-primaries are red, blue, and yellow; their secondaries being respectively purple, green, and orange. Few people, however, even if they be painters, know that the light-primaries are, in a way, the pigment secondaries; namely, orange-red, grass-green, and blue-violet. These terms are accepted by scientists as denoting, with some precision, the particular shades of the colours of the spectrum. One important point to be noted is that the spectrum hues are fixed and unalterable; whilst the red, blue, and yellow of the painter's use may be any shade of those colours that his arbitrary taste adopts—a fact which renders experiment and argument almost futile in the matter of pigments. Any variety of the pigment-primaries will, when mixed in pairs, produce something of the nature of secondaries, but the process is very much of the "wait

and see" order. With the light-primaries the results are usually foreknown and calculable. It is known that if in a darkened room rays of the red and green light-primaries are projected upon one spot they form yellow. Red and violet produce magenta; green and violet give blue. If all these overlap the result is white.

The white light that reaches us from a sun-illuminated cloud may, by means of a prism, be split into all the colours of the rainbow. These, in their infinite gradations, comprise every colour, and more also, to which the human eye is sensitive. When this beam of white light falls upon any surface, a portion of it, great or small according to circumstances, is reflected to the eye as it first comes, *i.e.* as white light unchanged. A small portion of the beam is absorbed when it falls upon a white surface, and a large portion when it falls upon a black surface; but in both cases the portion that is reflected is unchanged. A sheet of white paper reflects the component parts of the white light equally; but if a wash of yellow pigment be laid upon the paper this equality is disturbed. What happens then is that the blue-violet light-primary in the white beam is absorbed whilst the two others, orange-red and grass-green, are reflected together, resulting, as shown above, in yellow; and as such we describe the coloured paper. Supposing we then add to it a wash of transparent blue to make it green; the red light-primary rays are no longer reflected with the green but are absorbed with the blue-violet; the green part of the white beam alone being reflected. By this process of absorption and reflection does the eye have knowledge of the various colours of objects.

These matters will be made clear by reference to the adjoining diagram where the three light-primaries are

placed as complementary points of a triangle. The side lying between any two points represents the secondary colour derived from the primaries at those points.

Let us now see what happens with the *pointilliste* system of yellow and blue dots. We know them as yellow and blue by the reflection of certain coloured rays out of the white light which illumines them. The yellow ones absorb violet rays and the blue ones absorb

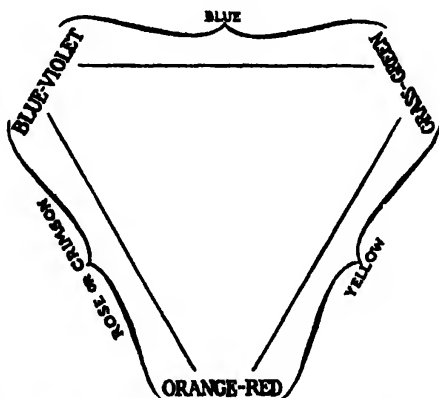


Diagram showing that red, blue, and yellow, the primary colours of pigment, are the secondaries of light as revealed by the spectroscope, being composed of the spectrum primaries here placed at the corners of the triangle.

red rays. The yellow ones reflect green and red: the blue ones reflect green and violet. Thus we have an excess of green rays, which is no doubt strong enough to account for the green suggestion that comes when the dots are too small or too distant to be focussed—conditions which, however, are usually lacking in the *pointilliste* pictures. And even were they present we have seen that the sensation would be so slight as to be practically elusive. What then is its value as a factor

in the colouring of a picture? The blue and yellow dots assume a greyness, as has been pointed out. This is a neutralisation due to the fact that between them they reflect all three of the light-primaries. The full complement of light-primaries in coloured light, produce white light; but the full complement of light-primaries reflected from pigment, by no means will give white paint. On the contrary, there is in the latter case a negation rather than a reconstitution, and this tends, under ideal circumstances, towards black. Inasmuch as the dots are not laid with such meticulous accuracy as to avoid interspaces, the blackness of neutralisation is modified by the light tone of the canvas, and greyness results.

We are faced, then, with these two alternatives:—either the dots merge, calling up the faintest suggestion of green, and greatly lowered in force and brilliancy by greyness: or else they tell as blue and yellow spots distinctly seen with no suggestion of green whatever.

It might be thought that nevertheless the *pointillistes* would be justified in using pigment approximating as nearly as possible to the light-primaries and so get resulting effects of light and intense colour. Supposing it were possible for a painter to lay microscopic dots of the spectrum orange-red and grass-green side by side without any uncovered interspaces a tint resembling yellow would result, but again it would be lacking either force or brilliancy for the reasons already stated. So green and violet might call up a blue, and orange-red and violet a crimson, in a dim way.

In a former chapter on colour it was pointed out that what the artist calls fine quality of colour is almost invariably derived from some manner of qualifying one

tint with another. There are certain old stained-glass windows which, having suffered ruin, have been pieced together in a medley of tiny fragments, and these exhibit great beauty by the blending of rays which pass through them and take their colour from the glass. Where multiple printings (as in chromo-lithography), or the combination of coloured strands in fabrics bring this about, there is one fact common to both; namely, that the initial colours are quite lost to ordinary sight in the result. They disappear by reason of their minuteness. The dots and hatches of the *pointillistes* do not disappear. They are invariably too aggressive to allow of union, and that being so, the ostensible object of their existence is scarcely if ever served. On the score of intensity of hue the method fails entirely, since not only are pigments unsuitable in several ways for the work which they are supposed to do, but they lack the brilliancy required for the light phenomena the *pointillistes* claim to employ.

What painters can do in the way of combining units of colour in order to secure quality is to break a layer of applied pigment by touches of a variant or corrective. This is one of the commonest and best understood resources in painting. When it is well done its *modus operandi* is never betrayed, though it may reveal itself to the expert. Possibly *pointillisme* arose by some thoughtless and exaggerated use of this beautiful method of breaking colour. If so it is an instance of the one step from the sublime to the ridiculous.

As a matter of practice, the very laboriousness of the dotting or hatching process *ipso facto* places the method of *pointillisme* in direct antagonism to impressionism;

for the essence of impressionism is that it admits of the direct and therefore rapid recording of effects which are momentary. A passing effect in a landscape might be gone for ever before a *pointilliste* could place his first score of dots, and he would want many hundreds, perhaps thousands. It is obvious, therefore, that if the method can be turned to any account at all, it is one for the studio rather than for open-air painting. But as only a mechanical minuteness justifies the theory it cannot be said to constitute a good method for an artist.

The case is even less excusable where artists have retained the method while rejecting the primary tints notion; simply laying masses of a single tint in this unprofitably laborious way. The result has been that at close quarters their pictures have not been presentable—the spectator being behind the scenes so to speak—and at the distance at which the granulation of the dots is lost the picture is too far off for the subject to be felt.

Such methods of laying paint were obviously the death-blow to all the old charms of drawing; for neither flow of line nor the nice appreciation of subtle curves nor beauty of contour are possible when one has to tap and stab and dab. Drawing is literally the *drawing* of a tool along in the way it should go, and only by that mode can the feeling and quality of line be secured.

Pointillisme is therefore a way of avoiding all the obligations of draughtsmanship, of which the incompetent take ample advantage.

Its highly texturous quality is likewise a cloak, for within its granulated aspect clumsy work, retouchings and other faults of style lie snugly hidden. It renders impossible the masterly suavity which is a distinct

delight in the handling of the old masters. And although its texture may impart a sensation of activity to the colour, it is one of ashy grittiness rather than of palpitation; for the inseparable greyness bars the intensity and purity of colour which comes of "fatly" painted passages. In *pointillisme* one is always more conscious of the pigment than of the effect intended.

It is maintained that impressionism does not set out to give the form of things, but the colour. This is a just contention, and logical enough. Drawing itself can stand alone and always has done, and there is no reason to suppose that colour cannot stand alone also. In some of Turner's most poetic and imaginative works form is almost non-existent; colour alone holding all the charm of the subjects. But what Turner painted in that way were the subjects that looked that way in nature and could not be adequately rendered in other ways. This is vastly different from representing anything and everything in a formless manner.

A misty headland over a misty sea, so enveloped in glowing and melting colours as to be more a beautiful dream than an appearance of concrete things; that is exactly the kind of subject that in Turner's case called up the colour treatment. At the time of life when he painted these things his mind was turned to such colour fantasies. The firm drawing and solidity of his earlier styles were quite left behind. Yet the latest Turners do not come short of as much drawing as was necessary to them. The colour of their subjects melts by such delicate nuances that a line of demarcation between forms is not possible; but the colour concentrates, in a perfectly natural way, into what is an adequate indica-

tion of the form within the nebulosity. And, of course, it is the nebulosity which is the picture.

How different is this to the representation of near objects by such a method! It is within the experience of the writer that interiors, with their chairs and tables and the human figures about them, have been depicted in a nebulous way, although not in the broad style of Turner, but by the dot method.

There can be no excuse for painting furniture and faces as though they were distant rocks enveloped in mist. And when the painters who do so maintain that they see things in that manner the logical mind either refuses to believe it or is driven to assume that the painters have gone very much out of their way to falsify the records of their own optic nerves upon some impulsion outside the bounds of pure art.

The *plein air* way of viewing things as a patchwork of colour creates in the beholder distinctly new ideas and sensations; many of which are valuable as extending our susceptibilities to the beauties of nature. But it is seldom that these sensations minister to the feeling of reality. All subjects demanding the sensations of solidity and weight suffer by this mode of vision. One can recall a large figure subject in a recent Royal Academy exhibition where the abstract rendering of sunlight and the brilliancy of reflected lights in the shaded sides of several large, near figures positively rendered them all ethereal rather than corporeal. They appeared to have no more substance than soap bubbles. In getting light the *pleinairistes* have forgotten to paint darkness. It has been said that the test of a colourist is in the painting of shadows.

If we are going to allow our new view of colour to stultify our old view of substance and solidity, we shall only be bartering one advantage against another. And if we enquire which of these two aspects is the more indispensable, we are constrained to admit that without form almost every variety of artistic representation would suffer more or less.

There is no telling how far this development of the colour-sense will go by the agency of landscape painting. But the probability is that painters will always be ahead of the general public in the matter. The development certainly entails a special culture of the eye. It would appear that colour is more observed in these days by the generality of the people than it was in the past; and there is reason to think that familiarity with the results of colour exercises is producing more sensibility to rays which were formerly out of the range of human vision. It is possible that in the future we may be conscious of "infra red" and "ultra violet" rays which are now only recorded by certain photographic plates.

Well! the world grows more and more complex and extensive. We are surprising Nature's secrets one by one; subduing her; violating her privacy; making burglarious entries upon her store-houses with Science as a crowbar and Luxury as receiver of stolen goods. Let us hope that we are also growing more artistic!

The colour as we see it when well painted to-day is without doubt truer to our colour-sense than is the colour even of Titian, who, could he come to life, would be mystified and perhaps distressed by ours. He was just as doubtless true to the colour-sense of himself and his admirers, for they were willing to pay large sums

of money to possess the pictures painted in accordance with it. It made them happy. Can we to-day say more?

It is to be hoped that there is a real advantage in having an art so scientific; a colour-sense that grows by what it feeds on and which we try to keep pace with by creeping nearer and nearer to the standard it sets. What is the standard? If we admit that the later efforts in painting are truer to nature than the earlier efforts, we have admitted that our aim is the literality of a realistic manner. But we have already discovered that the phase of art which is the highest and finest is not literalism but idealism. Is the highest aim of art to make elaborate efforts for the discernment and seizure of a complexity of hues which modern sight reads into things? That is after all only a means, not an end.

That somebody must be engaged in working out these problems cannot be denied; but those who are, need not sue the public with their results in the name of art. It is not art: it is science. This is where the experimenter should stay in the workshop: he is out of place in the showroom. If he were more often in his proper place, we should be spared a deal of humbug!

Pioneers and reformers, carried along by the impetus of zeal, usually take their principles beyond the point where they would tell to the best advantage. In art this is invariably the case. The cleverness of the artist carries him beyond the point of beauty. It is quite as inartistic to overshoot the mark as to fall short of it. We are in a bad way when our railway train does not take us as far as we want to go; but are we any better off when it passes our station?

A deduction from all this is that the best and most appealing art is not the latest, but something a little behind the latest, wherein the artist is not harassed with problems nor over-zealous about new facts; but can turn to good and idealistic account whatever knowledge has been assimilated in the practice of his profession.

It is better that development should be evolutionary than revolutionary. Why should people be suddenly expected to see in a new way? Men have been used to seeing the objects around them as solid things which they believe to have hard edges. What their sense of sight has reported their sense of touch has confirmed. Artists know that the edges of things are seldom, if ever, hard; and they do not paint them so. But the intelligent man-in-the-street thinks they are painted as he sees them, which shows that the painting is right. And as a rule he sees that something is wrong when they *are* painted hard. He is no fool, and can feel the difference between a beginner's steel-hard edges and the accomplished painter's treatment, though he may not be able to point it out. But he will have none of the blurred and nebulous edges of the extremist—which proves that such painting is wrong.

Impressionism and every other new principle should come into partnership with the parent business. They should not set up rival establishments. The illuminating discoveries of pioneer painters should not give rise to new schools: they should purge, purify and enrich the old one (which is, of course, what they do ultimately) and keep it young and healthy. What is desirable is not substitution but assimilation of principles. So perfect

should be the assimilation that the latest works of art should show the just and proper development caused by the advent of the new principle. It is a wrong state of things when new ideas refuse to attach themselves to the existing sum, but stand aloof and develop upon their own lines in a direction that takes them further and further from the original stock.

Impressionism turned its back not only upon the accepted principles of light and shade (which after all had some truth in them) and composition (which was founded upon æsthetic principles); but upon all established pictorial ideas; idealism, intellectualism, symbolism and so on. For what? What did it put in their place? Manet invented new subjects as vehicles for his new principles, and they were of such a character as to bring him as much notoriety, *of a sort*, as did the principles they enunciated.

But the history of the world teaches us that it is usual for apostles of new creeds and starters of new movements to be over-zealous, as well as for their immediate disciples to carry enthusiasm beyond reasonable bounds. They will not pause to ask whether the principles they are treading down and the styles they are throwing over are worth anything for the goodness and truth that is in them. Naturally all this causes consternation amongst the adherents to old principles; and so it usually happens that a new régime begins with a reign of terror.

And under the cloaking turmoil of a reign of terror there are to be found many who commit crimes in the name of liberty. They assume the cockade, and under the ægis of a veritable tri-colour, pass as being in the movement. Without assimilating its matter they make

a brave show with its manner. Their voice is raised in strident tones in order that those who cannot judge shall esteem them heroes and yield to them the spoils of war.

To change the metaphor: Impressionism, *Pleinairisme* and *Pointillisme* have opened the gates to incapacity and chicanery.

XV

DEVELOPMENT

Novelty of impressionistic modes—Impressionism of Velasquez and Turner—New ranges of colour—Old and new styles of vision—Instinctive and acquired sight—Their methods compared—Van Heyden—Undisciplined painting—Wrongly applied impressionism—Greater scope of instinctive vision—Dr. F. W. Edridge—Green's views on colour and tone sensitiveness—Looking for detail and looking for effect—A deleterious trick of vision—Low key—Soft edges in nature—Corot's "Fisherman's Hut" and "The Flood."

THE observance of transitory effect in the open is the aspect of landscape painting which has been farthest developed. The desire to seize such effects naturally led to modifications in methods of painting. Either of two ways was open to the painter. One was to watch and rely upon his memory; the other was to paint the leading notes of tone and colour with the utmost rapidity while the effect lasted. To do the latter the artist had to regard his task in a manner entirely different from that of the still-life painter. A complete realisation being impossible in the few fleeting moments the effect allowed, he took only those aspects of the view that were not stable; that would not appear again on the morrow. The impressionist therefore neglected form and detail because those things, being permanent, could be secured at any time. But the development does not lie here, for all this has been understood for ages, and practised constantly. The new thing about it is that artists are now content to specialise on these lines, calling themselves impressionists and valuing their most hasty notes as finished and choice works of art; whereas the

earlier painters used such sketches only as notes and data for perfected works produced in the studio. The development lies in this attitude towards the sketch. At the same time it should be borne in mind that the greater number of fine landscapes to-day are painted in the studio.

The misfortune of development is that it necessarily proceeds by a series of novelties, and novelties turn the brain of so many people. When a new idea first makes its appearance it is in the forefront of all that concerns it, and much time has to pass before it settles to the level of all ideas that have gone before it; where, shorn of the attractions of mere novelty, it takes its chance of winning on its merits.

The idea of impressionism has not yet settled down to its proper place amongst other ideas of art. When it has done so it will no longer rank as the only idea worth entertaining, but merely as one of many alternative ideas of artistic vision. Moreover its being the latest by no means implies that it shall be the last. People who interest themselves in the whole course of art from the beginnings are quickly struck by the fact that art mounted by other methods to very high altitudes: that for eighteen centuries art flourished on the old lines, the concern of kings and emperors; the delight of the people.

It is impossible to assume that the impressionistic vision was not experienced during these centuries; for here and there painters have introduced it in the methods of their work. Velasquez and Turner did so, to name only two. But people, as a whole, did not recognise the impressionistic view of things as an alternative and proper method of vision, and its peculiarities they

may have regarded only as embarrassing defections which they probably made instinctive efforts to overcome.

The fact that the new method was, in the end, recognised, separated and exploited ought not for one moment to discredit the other more natural and instinctive method of vision. Our advanced painters and critics who have narrow views, make a mistake in regarding as unworthy all that has gone before this latest development in the faculty of seeing and the art of representing. To stigmatise a thing as being old-fashioned is a very great popular fallacy, due invariably to ignorance. It is a fallacy blind to the logical consequence that the next fashion must in turn throw back the stigma upon the present new fashion.

As a matter of fact much of the early impressionism is already old-fashioned, for on the line of colour at least, we have developed beyond Manet and Monet. Artists are beginning now to paint the phenomena which are not due in any way to the object; but take place in the eye physiologically. These are certain mechanical results of the *modus operandi* of colour vision, and have been described by an eminent living painter as "the sort of colour you see when you are not looking for it."

As we grow more sensitive we shall doubtless come upon further facts of vision which will be seized and forced into artistic service; but if we know exactly the why and the wherefore of all these things we shall not be misled into supposing that up till that time nobody had seen properly. We may grant that the race is more sensitive, more nervous than it was; but whether for that reason it is better than it was is a question. Can we prove that it is stronger, healthier, happier, braver,

wiser, more philosophic, intellectually mightier? If so, where are our latter-day Da Vincis? They should be recurring at shorter intervals.

The old style of vision, which I have called the *instinctive*, relies largely upon knowledge of the object. A seventeenth-century Dutchman would paint much more exactly the things he knew well than the things that were new and strange to him. That is to say he would paint his knowledge into his work when the object was out of the range of scrutiny; but if a thing he had never seen before were put in the same place, his record would possibly approach much nearer to the impressionistic pole. The position of the impressionistic painter is that he casts out of his mind all previous knowledge of the object and paints it as though it were an unknown thing to him. Where the detail is well defined in the brightly lit passages, he still refuses to look in such a manner as to see it distinctly; but gives the generalised view of objects such as one would have who only caught an unfocussed glimpse of them in passing. This is a view of things acquired for the artist's own purpose.

Let us assume a cottage standing in a sunny valley. The instinctive sight takes note of details in the shaded side. The acquired sight refuses them and prompts the artist to paint broadly and flatly the general tone of the shadow—a thing difficult to arrive at without training. The argument for the acquired sight is that one does not see these details when looking with a shifting, relaxed vision. The argument for the instinctive sight is that one *does* see them, and that very distinctly, as soon as the gaze comes to rest upon them in a natural way.

There is as much reason in one of these arguments as in the other; but the significance of their different methods lies in the fact that the instinctive view would serve the purpose of one who wished to make a picture of the cottage and its surroundings, and the acquired view would serve the purpose of one wishing to paint the *effect* of the complete scene. If the cottage, together with its side in shadow and the shadow it cast, established some admirable relation with the sky or the bright distance so that the mood of the complete view rather than the items of the view became a source of æsthetic pleasure to the beholder, then the impressionist's view would be fit and proper, because it would be under no obligation to render more detail than would be sufficient to establish the nature of the different objects. In other words he could concentrate his observance upon the effect and not upon the objects as such.

This is all that impressionism claims or can justly demand, and it has been done often enough in the history of art. There is a very creditable attempt at it even by Van Heyden, the most microscopic detailist of them all. It is in the National Gallery, No 994, called "A Street in a Town." In this example it is easy to see that the complete effect captivated the artist and gave the artistic impulse; not the structural details of the houses. Looser, if not broader painters than he have attacked the problem successfully without running to those extremes of "fuzziness" and indeterminateness which second-rate painters adopt to-day who delude themselves that breadth is incompatible with drawing.

The undisciplined slapping on of paint in a more or less serious effort to copy an effect requires no manual

skill whatever, and the most untutored person with an eye for matching tints could essay it creditably.

Painters reply to this that when one looks for drawing one loses the general effect. The answer to that complaint is that the general effect is only half the battle. If in practice the artist finds his energies unequal to the task of giving all there is to give of an object, the blame is surely with his powers. The ideal still remains with the theory although the practice fails. The fine artist's picture of a thing should have body and soul living together. The mere ghost is too unsubstantial, just as the mere corpse of uninspired literalism is too gross.

Beginners and ignorant people who follow fashion for its own sake discredit impressionism by applying its extreme methods to subjects for which it is unsuitable: to the representation of near objects, often in interiors. They seldom give a mood or an effect in these attempts, but present not only the items in a landscape but faces, tables and chairs and so forth in a smoky disintegrated way that outrages intelligence.

Suppose now another view, say of a river in a town; the light bright but diffused, coming through thin clouds; the air full of vapour; in the distance, a cathedral and other buildings, a bridge, wharves and boats. Everything in such a view is retiring and soft, with no very pronounced accents and all the small detail veiled. Supposing then we could bring Van der Heyden and Guardi and set them down to paint. With the utmost searching care they could not put sharp and elaborate detail into it, for that would be beyond human vision; but if they painted never so painstakingly the result would be, in effect, just what a good impressionistic picture might give of the same scene. Here then the

two schools would meet on the same ground. But supposing another trial were made on another day when the air was clear and everything brightly revealed. The picture of the old school would then convey certain delights that are felt by many people in the exhilaration of a clear view on a fine day. But the impressionist methods of an extremist, after making due adjustments of colour, would give little scope for rendering his picture much different from what it was in the former version.

It is true, in fact, that an extreme system of treatment has a levelling effect upon a painter's work. The men who have the strongest idiosyncracies of method usually prove the least versatile; their work being all more or less alike. The instinctive view seizes upon every variation in nature and is interested in each for its own sake. The acquired vision sees them all through the same arbitrary medium of the inner-consciousness.

The happy mean between the two styles of vision can occur only when the truths and principles of impressionism and *pleinairisme* have been so assimilated that pictures are neither all effect nor all detail; but display each of these characteristics as they are called for by the subject-matter. Then the artist's eye will neither strain for detail where the effect dismisses it; nor reject it where the effect allows it. Modern principles will not then be exploited as an end; but will modestly take their place in the machinery of art as a means. Greater colour-sensitiveness will introduce hues that are more prismatic and tone-sensitiveness will regain its old force and be no longer falsified by strivings after specious effect.

Dr. F. W. Edridge-Green, the expert upon colour-

blindness, in an article on that subject has written as follows:¹ "It is probable that though we have gained in colour perception, we have lost in acuteness of sight. It is well known that savages have a far more acute sight than is normal in civilised communities. I have examined a colour-blind person who was able to read coloured test-types at more than twice the normal distance. There is no doubt whatever that the sense of colour and the perception of light and shade are quite distinct. In the same way acuteness of hearing and musical ability are not related. . . . It is easy to suppose that primitive man saw all objects of a uniform hue, just as they appear in a photograph, but that he had a very acute perception for differences of luminosity. In the course of time a new faculty of the mind, a colour-perceiving centre, became developed. This colour-perceiving centre in its undeveloped state was first only able to appreciate those differences which are caused by the waves of light which are physically most different. Evolution then proceeded on the lines that I have already indicated."

Regarding the statement that primitive man had keen sight for everything except colour, it may be granted that everybody whose vision is of the elemental kind sees things in a hard matter-of-fact way, whether they be early or present-day savages, or people of to-day who lack the imagination that comes of culture. It is really a question of what effort is made in the vision. A person not accustomed to look at things solely for the interest in their appearance has not developed the kind of effort that sees effects: he has developed the kind of visual effort that seeks for details. A savage who looks

¹ *Nineteenth Century and After*, April, 1902.

with any purpose at all at a thing looks keenly. He wants to see as much as he could if he were quite close to the object. On the other hand the man who looks for effect alone makes no such strong effort. He strives rather to see the object in a way that the savage would deplore as defective and useless. He tries to eliminate the detail and see objects in an environment and under superficial conditions.

Both of these methods are capable of development. It may be proved that artistic culture has developed the seeing for effect; but as to the seeing for details, neither social nor industrial requirements seem to have pushed it forward. Man no longer has to scan the horizon for enemies or for food. Our sailors and scouts no longer rely upon the naked eye for distant sight. Optical instruments are in the hands of all whose duty it is to keep a sharp look-out. We may therefore assume that on the side of keenness, vision has perhaps retrogressed.

The artistic community does not stand in very large proportion to the population of the world, so possibly the art influence has not done much to develop the lax vision. There must still be a vast number of both cultivated and uncultivated people who are incapable of regarding objects in the loose and soft way that characterises artistic vision of these times. Beginners in draughtsmanship usually make their edges as hard as steel. They also have a fairly sound perception of monochrome tone-values, but fail in converting colour-values to tone-values—which is often an embarrassing task enough to the mature artist. These facts would appear to bear out the contention of Dr. Edridge-Green.

Apart from the undesirability of allowing a bodily

faculty to become atrophied, there is the further danger of over-development of the soft effect vision. It is quite a common practice for artists to half close their eyes so that the lashes interfere as a veil to break up the detail and generalise the effect. The ultimate advantage of such a plan is much to be doubted. It has probably had a lot to do with creating the "fuzzy" picture, which, naturally enough, is ridiculous to the man-in-the-street who has not thus tampered with his normal vision by learning tricks of the art-school.

All inevitable and legitimate developments of the visual organ and the sense of sight have a right to affect the practice of art; but a habit which does not concern the phenomena of sight, and is only a trick of a part of the anatomy outside the organ, is nothing but a stultification of the visual sense, and as such it should be regarded.

The beginner who has not yet learned to discriminate between the differences of tone may find it a help to look through the lashes; but he should be early taught the danger of relying upon that resource and regarding the view he thus gets as the true view of the tonal values he wishes to represent. The plan results in a lowering of the tones, but not in strictly relative proportions. It cuts off light, and thus throws the tones of the object much lower down in the scale with the result that the lower tones have shorter intervals between them than they would have were they seen in a natural manner in their proper place higher in the scale.

The plan likewise falsifies colour intensities very considerably. In fact both as to tone and colour the effect approaches that of twilight, when the lowest tones merge until they disappear, where the light ones are therefore

relatively too high; where warm tints grow dark and heavy whilst cool tints turn relatively lighter and greyer.

There was a fashion some years ago of painting landscape in a very low key. The results were just those stated above. An overwhelming gloom pervaded scenes of open sunshine. The fashion was probably the result of the eyelash screen and the black mirror—another snare—the former where the edges were fuzzy and the latter where they were “tight.”

The true artistic vision is superior to all such adventitious interferences. The man who cannot train his eye to see what edges are soft and what are not is in a bad way. He cannot cut the Gordian knot and solve his difficulties by looking at everything in an unnatural way and then finding it *all* soft and painting it so. When he does this he is stupidly perpetuating an unlovely error.

Contours in nature are soft for specific reasons; but where those reasons do not exist they are not soft. The contour of a curving plane such as exists in a pillar, a tree trunk, or an arm, will most likely be soft because what the eye sees is not an edge but a foreshortened area upon which light and air play in a rapid gradation caused by the curve. This gradation of light and air results in a softness that would not occur if the object faced the eye with a flat side having sharp edges.

In the leaves of trees or other material through which light passes softness is again the result. Amongst leaves against the sky there is a halation of light as well as a reflection from the varying angles of the leaves; and these are causes which result in the breaking up and veiling of the form. It is for this reason that the edges of trees are difficult to render. The softness that comes

of a smooth attenuation of tone is not enough, for it does not suggest the actual form. Some painters of eminence have allowed their trees to lose the leafy look and become mere smoke at the edges. Corot has solved these problems as well as anybody; but his softness is not that of the blurred vision which melts everything. He knew the value and propriety of accents and of firm contours. In his "Fisherman's Hut" now in the National Gallery one may see how deliberately firm are the edges of the hut and how valuable they are as an accent in the flickering and shifting leaves of the willows. "The Flood" hanging in the same collection is also a fine study for softness and accent.

XVI

QUALITY

"Quality" defined—Mediums conducive to quality—Its existence in colour—Handling and surface of oil-paintings—Van Eyck—Smooth painting and "loading"—The carriage-varnish ideal—The "softener"—The attraction of rough execution, and its repulsion when extreme—Factors of quality in colour—Humidity—Mist as a qualifier—Transmitted and reflected light—Experiment for warm and cold colour—Little quality in dry atmospheres—Effect of vapour in light—Charm of misty colour.

"QUALITY" is a word of universal application in art, and it would not be easy to explain its significance to any one who by observation had not already begun to be alive to its charms. It would seem in most cases to be concerned with technical matters. Though by no means the same thing as *feeling* it would nevertheless almost answer to the definition of that term already advanced, namely: the evidences of emotion which the artist feels in his work. A line has quality when we see and feel what fine impulse was in the artist's mind at every stage of it. A machine-made line has nothing of this although it may not lack excellencies, as in the case of an arc struck by a compass-pen, or a line that is ruled. Yet a line that is drawn by hand does not necessarily have quality on that account, for it may be an awkward, hard and unfeeling one.

Some materials lend themselves more readily than others to this most desirable attribute. Charcoal in the hands of a deft worker is a ready vehicle; but perhaps the etched line possesses it most. Etchings altogether seem more capable of quality than most mediums, and

that is largely because the processes from beginning to end are in the hands of the artist. Here the personal factor appears in the work of the needle, in the biting, and in the printing. All other methods of reproduced pictorial work are at the mercy of machinery for their final stages; and on this account quality might be called the trail of the human agency in the execution of a work of art.

There is not much quality of line in the early stage of an etching, although the disposition of the lines may give quality of *tone*; but in the "biting," the lines themselves gain it. Still more do they do so in the printing, for there unlimited occasion presents itself in the inking and wiping of the plate. It would be possible to take a dozen proofs and find in each a different passage where quality is in special evidence; for no two proofs would be exactly alike.

Drawings by old masters are rich in this characteristic. Age seems to have played a part in it. Pencil drawings, if made with a feeling for a flow of "colour" from a soft lead may show much quality; but pen drawings are not so amenable. The character of a pen line is precise, disciplined, ascetic almost; and where pen drawings are remarkable for quality it will be found that it is due to the massed effect of lines or the various methods of their employment to make tone.

This mysterious charm is not entirely resident in the execution however; the tonal values of a picture can give rise to it. It often lurks in gradation of some particular part, which is usually the sky, and sometimes the solemn mass of a broad flat tone contrasting with lighter parts gives much of it. At other times it seems due to

a smooth texture and at others again to a crumbly one.

Just as the film of ink remaining upon an etched plate after wiping results in quality to the print; so may any adventitious tone or small accidental scratches and untidinesses upon a print or drawing result similarly—other conditions being favourable. A drawing that has not been taken special care of will frequently attain in the course of a long-suffering existence a quality which it lacked when it came fresh from the draughtsman's hands. Generally speaking, in monochromes quality seems to be the opposite of hardness and unvaried cleanness.

In colour quality is even more difficult to describe. It is generally accepted that colour applied with a simple, unanxious touch, and not afterwards meddled with, possesses a precious quality unattainable otherwise. The merest tyro finds that the simple, perhaps accidental touches of colour that he merely leaves behind with his brush are beautiful in themselves, however their relation to other things may stand; whilst the brushful of colour that is coaxed, altered, or corrected by part obliteration and retouching is hopeless in the matter of quality.

In oil-colour this state of things is not quite so obvious; but it exists nevertheless. A painting carried through in a "wet" state with direct unsophisticated touches is sure to have quality. But repaintings, especially when the first ground is dry, are sure to lead to poor results, unless they amount to a fresh start upon a thoroughly hard groundwork. The handling of Watts and Rossetti supplies instances of a worried, overwrought, ropy manner which quite misses the quality

of paint one finds in the best works of the direct painters like Hals. Nevertheless, some see in these a quality of the texturous sort.

Since reference has been made to "handling" as a medium for quality, this may be a fitting place to say something as to the qualities of surface in oil-paintings.

In the works of the early masters the surface of the picture is smooth and glossy. In the picture of Jean Arnolfini and his wife, that marvel of brilliant pigment and exhaustive delineation in the National Gallery, by John Van Eyck, the surface is like a polished board. It is only in later years that the thick and loaded impasto has been employed. This came into use with the new ideas brought by landscape. When the earlier painters grew to a freer hand and a bravura style they discovered fresh resources in the handling of their brushes. Upon the usual thin underpainting they painted the lighter parts of their works in heavier touches, so that the pigment stood up and caught more than the mean light. Thus by the varying thickness of the impasto they had secured a further means of expression. This "loading" as it was called, not only added a great gain in interpretation, but it also brought a quality into paint that it never possessed before. It was a pure delight in the masterly use of the pigment, obvious enough for all to see and understand.

Some two or three years back a literary gentleman in London, who upon some pretext or other was lecturing upon art, gave it as his opinion that artists of this day did not understand their trade because they were unable to paint in the smooth manner of the primitives. The

ideal which he upheld was the varnish on a carriage door. It is an ideal which luckily not many painters are likely to seek, as an end in itself.

To emulate the mere externals of past methods would not be to catch their quality. What makes a Van Eyck a prized work of art is not its smooth surface. Neither is the varied surface of a modern work a sign of worthlessness. The difference is merely one of method brought about largely by a change in tools and material. The method of small brushes, small touches, countless thin glazings and a smooth ground to start with, naturally resulted in an even surface. To-day we have further resources. We use large brushes and more pigment. We "load" our colour in places, and "drag" it in others: that is to say, we brush colour lightly over parts that are already rough enough to retain it only upon the higher surfaces. All this comes from a developed vision of things and would have been as impossible to the early painters as their smooth methods are to-day, except to archaists. In their way the present methods are as valuable as were those of old, though they may be no more beautiful; and only the most appalling ignorance could deny their merit.

Very smooth painting is devoid altogether of this quality of the pigment to which reference has been made. It is impossible to get freshness and purity of hue when every touch has been smoothed down to a general level and everything is uniformly thick and even. The aforesaid critic might have found satisfaction in the painters of early Victorian times; for then the badger-hair softener was a favourite tool for blending tints, and had at the same time the questionable advantage of knocking the tops off all the lively touches of

colour; smoothing out all brush-marks, and leaving the work "sweet" and with a surface like glass.

It is difficult to imagine Velasquez or Hals wielding the "sweetener."

In our day the more intelligent part of the public are greatly fascinated by the evidences of the *modus operandi* in pictures. Sketches are seldom too rough for them, and brush-marks in paint and pencil-marks in drawings are appraised favourably. The man-in-the-street of the better kind regards it as a sort of implied compliment that the artist should thus take him into confidence and show him a rough thing in the assurance that it will be well understood. He likes being taken behind the scenes in this way; but what he does not like is the *reductio ad absurdum* of the rough freshness, when paint lies over paint in heavy glouts; when coarseness stands in the way of vision; when he cannot see the picture for paint; when things that are not even paint are incorporated into the heavy, dead, and blundering mass. He repudiates this as bad and stupid work.

The greatest masters of painting have never strayed towards either of these extremes; but have ever known, felt, and tried to secure fine quality in their painting.

Although these conditions of execution are the chief factors in the quality of mere pigment, there are others related to pictorial matters which are perhaps even more important. As in monochrome work, gradation plays an enormous part in the quality of colour. A flat field of colour without any variety of hue or tone cannot hope to have any charm beyond the mere attractiveness of its hue. Quality can only appear when there are

diminuendoes and crescendoes, and changes of character that vary from transparency to opacity; from warm to cold; and these changes ought to be in evidence even in a small area.

But it behoves the artist to see quality in the colour of nature as well as to secure it in his painting. This country and others having a similar climatic character owe most of their beauty of colour to their humid atmospheres. Mist plays an enormous part in qualifying the tints of a landscape. In countries where the air is dry and clear the sight penetrates to the furthest limits and finds the hues of a scene to be strong, pure, exciting, and often magnificent; but seldom delicate and tender. The fierce illumination and dryness of the air render these subtler charms almost impossible.

We all know that when we stay at a country house it is quite usual for our host to take us round and show us the beauties of the neighbourhood. As often as not he will eagerly explain that we ought to have a fine clear day, for then we should be able to see So-and-so crag, and the spire of St. Thingamy's ten miles off, as well as other landmarks which the countryman feels to be topographically and atmospherically interesting. A mist is his abomination.

But an artist knows that the greatest charms of the country do not lie in its topographical features. To him a landscape does not appeal by reason of its extensiveness and its sharpness of detail. He would gladly forego these advantages in exchange for colour and mystery. To the eye of an artist the mist is a magician who works miracles in colour. Without his magic touch a sunset would be nought but a bald, blinding, and colourless

sinking of the orb. The mist is a wizard who can filter and split rays of light into many different tints; who can spread a gauze of opal before dark things and dark places, and who, with the sunbeams, weaves a golden gossamer to hang across the valleys.

The mist can do these things because it is a translucent body, half opaque and half transparent. All substances of this nature have that power. Vapour, smoke and dust; emulsions, glazes on pottery, and the layers of nacreous shells that give mother-of-pearl; oil, or slime upon water or mud—anything in fact, holding particles in suspension, has the dual power of transmitting one part and reflecting another part of the light it receives. Transmitted light is of a warm tint: reflected light is cool in colour. A conclusive demonstration of this lies in the well-known experiment with a glass of milk. Hold it up against the sun: the light that passes through it, or is transmitted, makes it of a tawny tint (warm). Spill a little on a black tray: the light that falls upon it and is turned back, reflected, to meet our eyes, makes it look blue (cold). These phenomena may be seen also in the smoke that rises from a chimney. Against dark trees it is bluish, because light does not come through it; but is reflected from it. Coming against the open sky, the smoke is of a brownish hue, because the light from the sky comes through it.

It is this play of warm and cool things caused by the different way light strikes the mists in a landscape which makes that "poetry of colour" so inspiring to painters, though so rarely perceived by the untrained eye. The natural and particular hues of things; their "local colours," are but small factors in the beauty of landscape. Even the autumn tints of trees are enhanced by

sun and vapour in the air. Much more are the vivid and unbroken greens of summer. In fact the ugliest thing with which the hand of man has desecrated nature may appear beautiful under certain conditions of atmosphere and light.

When we appreciate these facts we understand why the much-vaunted Orient is, in reality, not so beautiful in colour as are our own misty little islands. The eastern air is deficient in the mellowing vapours which abound in the air of a humid land. Dry atmospheres cause skies that are intensely blue; for there is no vapour to veil the blackness of the infinite depths of space behind them. Had but the light a mist to pierce on its way to earth it would be no longer so intensely blue. The mist would catch it and show up its brightness as dry air cannot do; for beams of light are only made visible by matter which lies in their path. If a sunbeam enters a dark room through a chink in a shutter the beam is not seen except by the bright patch on the floor, if the air is dry and perfectly pure. Stir up the dust and the ray comes into view as a solid shaft of brilliance; the dust being the equivalent of the vapour in the sky. It is this brilliant solidity that makes our skies so different from the darkness and blueness of tropical and eastern skies, where the light falls uninterrupted by vapour.

We must therefore come to hazy places like the Netherlands, Venice and the British Isles if we want the richness of warm colour. We need not be surprised to find then that we are on the very birthplaces of the greatest painters of colour that the world has known.

Let us imagine a sunny afternoon of an English

autumn or early winter. The abounding mists make everything harmonious, tender and opalescent. The slanting sunlight that falls upon birches, beeches, oaks and elms adds the flash of gold to their yellows, tawnies and reds; whilst the vaporous air tempers them all with a touch of pearl. The shadowy places it fills with milky blue. Delightful harmony! If the air be but slightly charged with vapour, so as to be imperceptible itself, then the shadowy places are more blue than milky. At least they are to the colour-sensitive eye.

When a mist thickens enough to deserve the name of fog, it has of course become too much of a good thing. The best quality maker is a mere haze, not so dense as to spoil the glitter of a winter sun. The air is then thick enough to broaden into simple masses all the small details of a scene, and even a cluster of ugly houses, if at some little distance, is transfigured into a thing of beauty. For whilst the sun displays the walls and roofs, bringing out patches of white, yellow and red, the shadows remain simple passages of milky blue with suggestions of local colour that do but tell as charming variations and modulations. The result is an iridescence far more lovely than the downright effect of such a scene under a summer sun in clear air. It is this iridescence that is so magical; qualifying, enriching, cooling, warming and mystifying colour everywhere. Its beauty is the beauty of the opal.

XVII

MURAL PAINTING

Historical compositions—The Church—Wall-reliefs of antiquity—Position of decorative works in buildings—Imitations of old masters—Claims of Allegory—Realism in commemorative works—The nude and flowing draperies—Watts's "Love and Life"—Strong position of classicism in art and life—Realism, naturalism and idealism in decorative work—Faults of the "grand style"—Recent movement against naturalism—Archaisms—The "flat wall" idea—Modern realism opposed to it—Naturalism of old masters with flat effect—Three dimensions and two in wall decoration—"Flattening" methods—Childish perspective—High and low horizon—Modern colour—The "hole in the wall" theory.

THE progress so remarkable in landscape work seems to have a poor counterpart in the domain of figure compositions. The day of immense canvases filled with colossal figures representing historical events or classical mythology is perhaps passed. There was a time when such things were considered indispensable for the decoration of large buildings; but people have come to see the absurdity of covering large canvases with elaborate compositions which are placed in positions where they can rarely be properly seen without considerable effort.

This was an anomalous fashion first adopted by the Popes for the aggrandisement of the Church and its structures. It came by way of Byzantine mosaics; and if in its later stages it could have limited itself to the simple and symbolic utterances of those decorations and of the wall-reliefs of Egyptian and Assyrian temples, it might still have justified its claim.

There is no question as to the soundness of the principle upon which the antique reliefs were wrought.

They were designed not only to break up the enormous areas which would have been otherwise too oppressively blank; but they also ministered to the psychological mood of the place they adorned. They were calculated to impress the inmate with the awful grandeur of the genius of the temple. Owing to the scale and conventional force of the figures the inmate was able to feel all this without any effort of scrutiny. He could see "out of the tail of his eye" enough to induce such sensations. The reliefs and intaglios dealt with actual incidents, of course; but they did not descend to a portrayal of emotions or manifestations of temperament in the figures, which were types and nothing more.

This is very different in spirit from a modern representation of an episode that may have occurred a thousand years before the artist's time, and which probably aims at correctness in matters of topography, costume, portraiture and so on; as well as embodying a conception of the behaviour of heroes and victims under stress of the event. The proper appreciation of all this would imply considerable knowledge, interest, and patience; to say nothing of abnormal eyesight, on the part of the inmates of the chamber so decorated. It is to be doubted whether such propitious conditions ever could have occurred in a natural and ordinary way. One cannot even imagine a devout worshipper in the Sistine Chapel straining his cervical vertebræ in order to admire the ceiling. If he is really devout he ought to be blind to such mundane matters. A deliberate appreciation such as these masterpieces deserve is possible only to the amateur and the sight-seer. Perhaps Julius II. had these as well as the devout worshipper in his eye—but that is another matter. However great these paintings

may be considered subject by subject—and nobody doubts Michael Angelo's genius—the conglomeration of them to form a ceiling is a gigantic failure, involving bad principle and wrong ideas.

The Greeks knew well enough where figure decoration should occur. Those old Greeks with their impeccable taste! We cannot find higher authority! They put their figures into pediments, friezes, and metopes on the outside of their buildings where the sunshine enriched their roundness with a starling chiaroscuro tempered with soft reflected lights; where the clear air and open daylight revealed at a glance the actions portrayed.

Later painting in the grand style founded itself upon the great Italians and upon Rubens, who painted acres of mural decoration of this sort. These masters set a fashion for following centuries. Ambitious and pretentious in character, its style satisfied the potentates for whose patronage it sued; but where it was not in masterly hands it became sadly bombastic and tiresome. Its colour was usually in accordance with Rubens, rich and juicy; but this quickly deteriorated in this country to an impenetrable brown under the smoke and fumes of the artificial lighting of those days. Where the colour was not of this luscious warmth it was no better for being poor and cold like the extensive works now to be seen upon the staircase of Hampton Court Palace.

It may be taken for granted that historical painting was intended for the palaces of the rich; for public buildings and for picture galleries. Its great fault was that, as decoration, the subject-matter was too complicated. There is no occasion for walls and ceilings to

furnish illustrations to a history that has no accompanying text. Such things have no chance with a public however willing it may be to admire and understand. Pictorial decorations are at their greatest advantage when their subjects are entirely impersonal; general in their application; and so simple in idea as to be understood without special knowledge. Each of these conditions can be well fulfilled by allegorical painting.

Allegory usually involves the use of nude figures and the classical forms of drapery; but against these things some have raised the objection of their being old-fashioned, averring that classicism is opposed to the spirit of the age. For these objections it is difficult to find any real foundation in respect to decorative painting on a large scale.

In the first place, as to allegory itself. The general being always a greater matter than the particular, it must follow that it has the larger appeal. Historical episodes come in the category of the particular; but allegory is general in that it deals with the philosophy of life in its broad applications. It can commemorate a great event in a more elemental and simple way than do an artist's reconstructions, which however satisfactory in their day may some day become ridiculous in the light of further knowledge and research. Reconstruction of actual incident is best justified when it is undertaken at a period near to its original occurrence; for then correctness of presentment is assured. It is then a fit and proper method for commemorative purposes. Nevertheless there are good examples of episodes commemorated by allegory. But the spectator who is required to call to mind an event, finds satisfactory con-

viction when he is assured that the reproduction before him is true to the character and details of the characters concerned. It is for this reason that the mediæval memorial sculptures which are portraits touch us so deeply. We really do think of the man, and in the light of the details of face and costume so faithfully given can easily picture him alive.

After all it rarely happens that painting is employed for the decoration of tombs, mausoleums, or other commemorative structures. It is more often found to serve the lighter moods of man, and for those ends allegory, by its general character and its lightness and suggestiveness, has been a favourite means. It deals not with man, but with mind; and for that reason it can never grow old-fashioned.

It happens that for centuries allegory has been associated with the nude figure and with flowing draperies; things which are also associated in the mind with classic times. No doubt there has been a considerable mixing up of all these things; and wherever classicism has been a bugbear to revolutionists in art, allegorical painting has participated in the blame. But allegory has no more connection with Ancient Greece than it has with New York. There are other ways of dressing allegory than those which make its types look like the gods and goddesses of antiquity. There is, for example, no touch of such a likeness in the works of Watts. "Love and Life," one of his most successful allegories, comprises two nude figures and scarcely anything more; and amongst his other works are many wherein the figures wear clothing of a nondescript character utterly unlike the statuesque robes of affected classicism.

Some modern foreign idealistic painters, amongst

whom may be named Boecklin, have shown how fine and inspiring a variety of work allegory may be in the hands of the pure idealist, and how absolutely fresh and modern in spirit the treatment may be.

The nude figure is particularly suitable for allegorical compositions for the reason that it has no costume to give it associations with any special epoch in history. Such associations are of no help where elemental matters are concerned. That such a use of the figure should be denounced as a copying of Greek art is a gratuitous charge. If it were a fact that the ancient Greeks were the only people who had human bodies the charge might stand. But we are all nude at times. In allegorical art the nude is employed as a symbol of *mankind* as opposed to *particular men*.

In the case of so-called "classic" or "flowing" draperies it should not be forgotten that as usually painted they would rarely pass the test of a classical expert in costume. They are in fact nondescript, which renders them eminently fit, like the nude, for symbolic figures dealing with abstract human characteristics.

Nevertheless, there are doubtless many, amongst whom I should count myself, who have a reverent regard for the good old classic style which has survived so much wickedness committed in its name and the consequent punishment. After all, classicism is an immense power in the world. In the various arts it stands for as much as do mediævalism and modernity. It always will be with us. We cannot bury it or get rid of it. It is in our streets and halls to-day; in our literature, in our speech, in our life, in our blood. It enshrines the ideal amongst our factory chimneys and our patent registering cash-tills.

Perhaps the factor that has been most active in bringing about a revulsion from classicism—apart from its remoteness from the realities of modern life, which is an inevitable factor standing first, but not at this moment under discussion—is the fact that it often overdid the antique canons of proportion; the massive limbs, the swelling chests and so forth. All this, allied to the poverty and tameness of idea which characterised the last part of the eighteenth and the first half of the nineteenth century, led to the nausea which caused its overthrow: rightly enough, because its advocates with narrow minds cut off all other lines of development—a crime indeed! But in these days of artistic freedom there is no likelihood of such an obsession, and the classic can well be admitted to its proper department without fear that it will overstep its bounds. That department will include allegory, in dealing with which it can inspire and guide its younger sister, modern idealism.

One often hears the argument that figures in the nude or in flowing draperies are unfitted for modern decorative painting because they do not reflect the life of our own day. That argument begs the question as to whether we want the realistic details, the outward and visible signs of our daily life reflected from our decorated spaces; or whether we should prefer the inward and spiritual grace of our lives to form the themes. That is purely a matter which must be decided by the circumstances of place and purpose. But we should not forget that realism and commonplaceness are not of themselves necessarily beautiful material for decorative art. In painting, quite as much as in literature, there is real need for flights into realms that our daily life knows

nothing of; for they are the peeps into the lands of visions which refresh the soul of man.

As to realistic representations of things in modern life there is no question that in the hands of a masterly designer they may prove eminently fine decorative material. But if the ideal is to be put away, then the real will fill the whole field. Of that alone, no matter how glorified by a decorative treatment, man must quickly tire. Why then should he not also be given the things that are the reverse, the foil, the complement, of those which beset him in life, many of which must necessarily be associated with strife and worry?

It might with fair justification be affirmed that art has always had more to do with idealities than with realities. It is admitted that its sphere lies in the leisurely and luxurious rather than in the utilitarian. No decorative paintings are really necessary: they are schemed solely for man's delectation.

The commonplaces of present existence are unfitting material for permanent decoration because they are not sufficiently remote from life to invoke imaginative mood in the spectator. It is not, however, maintained that machinery, motor-cars, sky-scrapers, and so forth, are incapable of beautiful aspects and of the highest artistic treatment in other departments of art. Neither does it follow that there is nothing else but the classic mode suitable for decorative purposes, for any setting or dressing that is removed enough from commonplaceness may be suitable. The quattrocento costumes of Leighton's "Industrial Arts of War" form quite a satisfactory dressing; and Puvis de Chavannes mixes the styles of costume, and introduces the nude also, without any regard for actualities or

possibilities; and he does so with perfect impunity because the solecisms do but remove his designs a step further from actuality and thus make them better able to bear messages of the ideal.

It has been claimed that there is a great argument for themes of the present day in the fact that the old masters painted their own environments as subject-matter for their works and that therefore we may do likewise.

It is to be doubted whether the old masters ever did this to any great extent in large decorative works; for these usually dealt with mythological or scriptural subjects. Yet where they did it will be found that the scenes they depicted were not transcripts from life; but were usually ideal scenes wherein celestial and sometimes infernal beings were among the everyday actors. This was quite enough to send the spectator's mind off upon quests of the imagination. Moreover the simpler existence of those times and the more picturesque clothing permitted then what would be distasteful now. In spite of such obvious differences, attempts have been made within recent years to interest the working people of London by reconstructions of their own sordid life in all its commonplaceness. It is impossible to speak here of the reception these works have received.

The allegorical style is even more suited to decorative works of a didactic nature. Watts found it an eloquent language, and so far as his themes were concerned it is difficult to think of any mode that would have suited them so well. Both he and Puvis de Chavannes have shown that it is not necessary to employ the human

figure in crowds and cascades as Rubens loved to. Their figures never sacrifice dignity by tumbling head over heels; nor do these artists ever depict men or horses from the underside; or show chariots seen from beneath. All such vagaries have come about by the practice of decorating ceilings with figure-subjects in the "grand style," and letting realism run away with the artist; a fault, by the bye, which is rampant among a certain school of artists of recent date in France. Short of these and similar absurdities, naturalism is a help rather than a hindrance to the decorative idea. It is the old difference between naturalism and realism. Figures may hold symbols and emblems in a perfectly *naturalistic* way; though no one would think it realistic for a lady of to-day to hold aloft a pair of scales.

Recent years have witnessed an increasing movement against naturalism, as being a phase antagonistic to the idea of the wall-space decorated. The idea of this space, it is held, should not be forfeited to pictorial ideas. In the belief that such matters as linear and aerial perspective, round modelling, natural action, modulated colour, and other characteristics of naturalism, prevent the wall upon which they appear from looking like a wall, modern decorative artists have deliberately adopted archaisms as a safeguard against the naturalistic view of things. The great decorative painters of the past strove, on the other hand, to eliminate the idea of the wall altogether, and to that end represented starry heavens in ceilings, columns, and openings in wall-spaces; at the same time giving to figures a perspective view from the floor.

It has been suggested to me during discussion of these

points that the old masters, the Venetians, Rubens and others, painted in a way which was, in effect, "flat" as the term is used in decorative design; whereas some modern decorators, particularly in France, have reached a pitch of realism that not only eliminates the wall but is disturbing to the harmonious effect in the building and disquieting to the eye.

Such intense realism as this is of course far beyond the naturalism that is advocated in these pages. Its aim is positively to create an illusion, and to that end it employs all possible relief and contrast of tones. This is putting the latest developments of realistic painting in the wrong place. Principles that control the key, the tonal scale, and the mood, have evidently been disregarded by the painters of such works, and therefore the painting, though it may be excellent in itself, is not excellently applied.

It may be asked why, if the force of effect which makes things appear actual is out of place in the decoration of a building, did the old masters try their best by perspective, modelling, and lighting to create an illusion. The answer would be that if they really did, all that they were able to achieve without the advancement of these days, was enough to satisfy their ideas of reality to the point of illusion (though it would not satisfy ours); but not enough to offend their sense of what was harmonious in the complete scheme. Their works to-day, mellowed by the centuries, appear to us eminently fitting for purposes of decoration; and at the same time they satisfy every rational desire to see things in paint that can be recognised without any intellectual shock as the things of nature. Their figures, their columns, their draperies, in spite of marvels of foreshortening and

bold tricks of perspective, are naturalistic to the last degree; whilst their harmony and equality of tone render them flat enough in effect. Can it be maintained that these ideals are surpassed by those of recent decorative painters in this country?

The anomalies that are committed in pursuit of this "flat" treatment could not be excused even were the results either achieved or desirable. Admitting for the sake of argument that it is necessary that the two dimensions of a wall (length and breadth) should not be complicated by the admission of the third dimension (depth) in the design; then obviously the only fitting decoration must be of the description known as "flat pattern"; but pattern being inadequate, the moderns retain the figure but try to make it look like flat pattern. And it has yet to be proved that the accepted methods of "flattening" a figure or other object in three dimensions succeeds to the slightest degree in its object. We may paint men as though they were pancakes, but this does not eliminate the *idea* of roundness and solidity so long as they are recognised as human figures. All that it does is to violate every idea in logic and beauty.

These dodges and tricks to flatten the figures, such as surrounding them with an outline, and painting them with neither modelling nor light and shade, are but illogical adoptions of archaic immaturity which art outgrew centuries ago. Let us paint frankly if we paint at all.

Further; the advocates of these anomalies persuade themselves that they are casting out depth; but in the same composition they place their flattened figures one behind another, and landscape behind both!

But there is yet another variety of flattening recently adopted. This is to place a crowd of figures in what appears to be an extremely crowded place. In this variety of work the figures are modelled: or rather they are painted with a conventional system of modelling which does not give them roundness, but makes them look like the painted figures that used to be sawn out of thin panels for fire-screens in the old days. These panel-looking figures are placed closely behind each other so that some partly obscure others. Twenty of them would appear to occupy about two feet of space. There is positively no sense of planes at all in this kind of work. Everything is delineated with scrupulous detail, and the result is a hotch-potch of archaisms.

Seeking for a motive for this in the most broad-minded and charitable mood, one can only arrive at the assumption that the object is to recall the aroma, the flavour, of early work. Such a slight, meaningless and sentimental motive is unworthy of modern art and certainly not worth the time and pains it requires, nor the opportunity and expense which it wastes.

I would ask whether it is not a worse artistic crime for painters in these advanced days to copy slavishly the *shortcomings* of mediæval work, than it was for the classicists of a century ago and less to copy what are admitted to be the *perfections* of Greek art.

Supposing that we could indeed cast out this idea of depth, the cubic idea; is it desirable that we should? Is it not better that the symbols we use; the types we delineate should be efficient?

I know that this flat-wall theory is a darling one with the few who have tried to practise it, as well as with students and others who are only too ready to absorb

any new theory that is offered them. But those who look for something beyond novelty and specious plausibility in a theory, have seen from the first that this one provides no effects that are beyond possibility with the old methods; and, on the other hand, results in weaknesses so obvious as to be the laughing-stock not only of the man-in-the-street, but the child from the gutter; and I myself have heard their scorn.

It can be shown that many modern ideas as to decorative designing are by no means as right and proper as the old. In the first place, the only possible result of muddling up perspective; of including several points of view in the same work; of deliberately altering the position of the vanishing point for horizontals that are in the same plane; of these and many other wilful absurdities the only result is that the spectator is mystified first and then disgusted. I have never yet heard who it is that accepts these things as charming naïveté. I have heard everybody whose opinion is worth having rail against them, amongst whom have been the very persons for whom works so done have been intended.

Some regard for perspective must obviously make the design better understood. The practice of having no rational perspective encourages another unpleasantness, namely that of a far-extending distance with a very high horizon, which would be the equivalent of a bird's-eye view were it not for the fact that figures and other objects are not painted in accordance with a high horizon. The result is an effect similar to that of a point of view out of a high window with all the figures *lying* on the ground, not standing upon it. This is thought by a few to be desirable because it is quaint! It certainly *is* quaint.

As a rule decorative paintings are above the eye; and the actual perspective of objects in such position would in most cases be unsuitable even if it were necessary. But, on the other hand, there is no excuse for throwing all perspective to the winds. The older schools have already practised the best possible compromise. They kept the horizon very low in most cases, whereby they gained dignity for their figures. It is a fact that things above the eye look bigger and more imposing than things below. It is also a fact that to look down on things does not make us feel respectful towards them, whilst to look up at them reminds us of our own lowness. Some of the best painters have placed the horizon absolutely at the feet of their figures, which were thereby made commanding and impressive; whilst the opportunity for sky behind them made for that clearness of mass and simplicity of statement which are the secret of nobility in design, and offer reasonable occasion for a strong pattern.

The next point is of colour. The rich and glorious colouring of the Venetians is now discredited. Perhaps Makart stultified it. At any rate we have grown ascetic in this country. Our hues no longer attempt the gem-like transparency and depth that Titian's had, nor the more modified tints of Veronese. Only Boecklin has had the courage to flout the anæmia of our modern greys and ashy violets, and to get all the significance and beauty that he could out of the pigments which nature and science in latter days have brought to our hands.

In decorative designs there is an obligation on the part of the artist to be guided by the colour conditions of the building. These may require either a rich or a

delicate scheme. But in neither of these does there appear any reason for the ashy quality; the chalky reds and the leathery flesh-tints. Between the colour of Titian and Fra Angelico there are grades enough for all purposes. Chalky or dirty colour is at no time fitting for decoration, the first duty of which is to be beautiful, inspiring, and joyous.

It is averred that landscape and other pictorial settings give the idea of a hole in the wall if they are in full colour. Where is the imbecile to whom such an idea can be so readily conveyed? Who surmises that trees and rocks and sky twelve feet above the floor in a room are the actual things, amongst which he could escape if he could get up to them? Ruskin flouts the notion in "The Two Paths." Imagine a design carried out in the flattest possible manner; and another modelled in the round so that there would be actual holes in the wall. Then imagine a third of the same design, painted in full roundness and rich colour. To which would the latter the more nearly approximate? There is no question that the two paintings would be practically equal in effect compared with the actual hole scheme.

The "flattening" theory is in truth but a chimera: a fine-drawn piece of theorising without practical value. What is really required of the artist is that he shall preserve harmony of tone and colouring that shall render his design homogeneous. To do this he need forsake none of the principles that have governed the past masterpieces of decorative painting.

What the decorative painter can do if he wants a simple and flat effect is to choose his theme and scheme his effect so that it shall come flat and simple naturally.

Nothing in the world is easier. It has been shown how often Nature presents herself in this aspect. The question is merely one of lighting. With the unlimited resources in lighting, in tonal key, and in colour key, every effect which modern decorative art strives for at the expense of naturalism could be sanely, happily and easily achieved by any artist who was master of his craft, and that without the least shock or resentment in either the cultivated or the uncultivated mind.

There are still two matters in which some schools of modern work have earned the opprobrium of the public; and they are deliberate and wanton faults of draughtsmanship, and purposely stiff and stupid posing of the figure. The defence for this kind of work is not generally known, and indeed it is difficult to see what form it could take. The practice is probably one of sheer affectation and does not concern us at this point.

XVIII

GENRE PICTURES

Genre defined—Brueghel—Lucas van Leyden—Quinten Massys' "The Misers"—Marinus—Wilkie's followers—Knaus—Sources of inspiration for landscape and genre—The Dutch and their idealism—No history in Dutch genre—Teniers and Ostade—Humanism—Pettie, Hunt and Good—Millet and Clausen—Humanism in literature—Need for humanism in the people's pictures.

SINCE one is so often asked what a genre picture really is, it may not be out of place to quote a dictionary definition of it. Lloyd's Dictionary says " (Fr., from Lat. *genus* [genit. *generis*]=a class, a kind.) A term applied to life and manners, which, for want of a definite character, are classed together as of a certain *genre* or kind. Under this title are comprised the grave episodes of life, which are to history what a single scene is to a drama, or a lyric to an epic poem. Also comic pictures of all kinds. . . . The principal *genre* pictures consist of scenes of every-day life, and may be classified. In taking for its subject the events of daily life, *genre* painting avoids religious themes as high and lasting, as well as historical subjects, which, though transitory, ought never to appear so. All the passing events of life, its characters and aims, offer fitting subject for *genre* painting. (Fairholt.)"

The style of the genre picture has always been a favourite one with the people. The more elaborately anecdotic it became the more fascinating it proved to that section of the public mind which takes pleasure in the subject-matter of a picture rather than in its artistic feeling and mood.

Pieter Brueghel the elder (1525-1569) is usually credited with the introduction of genre painting. But Richard Muther, in his *Geschichte der Malerei*, points to examples that are earlier. For example, a picture of a game of chess by Lucas van Leyden, who was born in 1404. He shows very ingeniously how genre grew by the Netherlandish love of still-life painting out of the religious painting which preceded it. In "The Gold-weighers," or "The Banker and his Wife" by Quinten Massys, (1460-1529) which is in the Louvre, the wife turns the leaves of an illuminated book on devotion, whilst keeping her eyes upon her husband's scales. Then comes Marinus van Romerswaelen, (1497-1567) with his "Gold-changers," a remarkably close copy of the same subject. Here the wife has her hand upon a book likewise, but this time it is an account book. In the National Gallery may be seen Marinus's "Two Usurers." The wonderful facial expression of these two characters will be remembered: one quite calm and unmoved and the other contorted with anguish and greed as he clutches at the gold. This version of the same theme would appear to have been derived from the Massys' picture of "The Misers" at Bologna, which is here reproduced. It shows no vestige remaining of religious subject matter; but the period of these pictures was still that of Biblical subjects, and Muther sees in these usurers a possible allusion to the parable of the Unmerciful Servant. There are several repetitions of the subject.

To paint the figures of the life around them and to try their skill with a crowded setting of still-life material seems to have been the great desire of the early Flemish



Photo Mansell *The Musicians* *Quentin Massys*
(Bologna, Pinacoteca)

Genre-painting at its birth and at its maturity. The Massys painted the memorable realism and enthusiasm in life of the Massys



Cassell & Co., Ltd. *The Music Lesson* *Gabriel Metsu*
(National Gallery)

The Metsu shows how a love of art for its own sake had, in a century and a quarter, reached the memorable realism and enthusiasm in life of the Massys

school. The claims of illustration took a second place and invented anecdote no place at all. When religious painting was at last left behind, Netherlandish painters launched freely into the painting of their kitchens, their cooks, and their utensils. Later their fish and fruit stalls, their market-places, their hucksters, peasants, and happy idlers employed their skill, as Richard Muther points out.

To all this literalism old Peter Brueghel added characterisation and the fun and trouble of human life. His street scenes abound with episode. He was a humorist and a satirist; and he it was who lifted the still-life painting of his time into real genre, which grew to be a wonderful style of art wherein the best Dutch exponents combined truth with invention; exhaustive records of everyday things with the excellencies and charms of tonal effect; honest and homely pastimes with unsurpassed character painting.

As the world grows older these invaluable works—sparks from the clash of happy simple times against rare artistic yearnings—will become of more and more absorbing interest, whilst the subject-matter of religious and classical pictures, which, indeed, have long since counted for nothing in the appreciation of works of genius, will sue for more and more toleration.

During the second half of the nineteenth century genre painting reached a climax in Germany. This has been traced to the direct influence of Wilkie. After the charming and unsophisticated work of Richter, whose pictures of the joys of childhood have gone to the ends of the earth; and after the romantic sweetness of Schwind, there followed a school of which Vautier and

Defregger were the leading lights. They painted scenes of village life, sometimes stirring but always charming. The tales were perhaps over-told; every character depicted taking a contributory part. Picturesque Tyrolese costume and a faithful attention to details joined with pretty girls and hearty men to make these village comedies popular not only in Germany but all over the world. England must have absorbed thousands of impressions after these works. They were bought because people loved them, not because it was considered the proper thing to have them. In monochrome their artistic shortcomings escaped, for they failed chiefly in regard to colour. In characterisation however they were unsurpassed.

But there was one painter, Louis Knaus, against whom even this charge could not be made. His works took a high standing in every respect. In Muther's *History of Modern Painting*, the author quotes a letter of Edmond About, written in 1855, which I will take the liberty of repeating:—"I do not know whether Herr Knaus has long nails: but even if they were as long as those of Mephistopheles, I should still say that he was an artist to his finger ends. His pictures please the Sunday public and the Friday public, the critics, the *bourgeois* and (God forgive me!) the painters. What is seductive to the multitude is the clearly expressed dramatic idea, while artists and connoisseurs are won by his knowledge and thorough ability. Herr Knaus has the capacity of satisfying everyone," etc. One of his most popular works, "Behind the Scenes" is given here.

The great difference between figure work of any kind and landscape work is this; that the landscape painter



Seemann, Leipzig

BEHIND THE SCENES
(Dresden, Royal Picture Gallery)

Ludwig Knaus

Typical of the climax of modern anecdotic genre. Here everything is offered to the mind graphically. The charms of suggestion and mystery have no place, hence the picture delights only to satiate

finds his inspiration in a moment, as he walks. It wants no research, no side-lines of expert knowledge, no seeking for models, no still-life work. Historical and genre painting require all this and much laborious indoor work, and besides have to fish about for good subject-matter in the first place. If landscape painting had to do all this—as alas it often attempts to do—there would be no spontaneity, no red-hot delight in a freshly found subject, and none of that directness and intimacy which are its great charm, and which come of the fact that nothing extraneous stands between the artist and the untroubled laying on of paint. The difference in method results in this, that the genre is a pictured story, a thing of the intellect; and the landscape a thing inspired momentarily by the beautiful in nature, a thing of the emotions. But this applies to modern genre of the elaborate kind, such as that of Frith and the German painters instanced above. There is another kind which will not bear the classification of anecdotic.

The landscapist's sudden enthusiasm, the humanist's emotion, the character-draughtsman's avidity, the humorist's sense, and the impressionist's love of effect, may unite at times to form a complete whole and the result will be a Rembrandt, a Chardin, a Millet, a Clausen. The artist who discovers a scene that stirs him, even if it be an old woman peeling potatoes in a barn, will want to paint it; not because of the fun of the situation (which is the chief motive in anecdotic genre) but because of the beauties that lurk in its colour, tone, or form.

The realism of the Dutch was prompted by the idealism they associated with their real surroundings.

They loved the play of light as its beams came into their chambers, revealing and casting into shade the treasured and lovingly-tended furniture of their rooms; their shining brass-ware and their costumes of gleaming silk. They loved to see the smooth faces of their bonny women modelled roundly and tenderly under the illumination. It was a joy to see the rugged and mirthful countenances of the gallants and burghers thrown into relief. They delighted in the warm mystery of shade in the corners of their rooms and of their churches, and, in the latter, the bold outstanding of the stone columns in noble and bright solidity. The rich reflected lights in the folds of drapery, the sheen of satins, the gloss of hair, the glowing hues of textiles and cut flowers, and the cool peeps of outdoor distance through doors and windows: all these things the great Dutch masters gloried in, and the people who encouraged the painters loved it too. This may have been mere genre painting; but it was certainly art also, and that of a high order.

The "Music Lesson" by Gabriel Metsu (1630-1667) (National Gallery) is here given as an example embodying the best traditions of Dutch genre work. Quinten Massys was actuated by the same impulses, although he carried his naturalism even farther, reaching a level in the psychology of his sitters which men like Metsu never strove for.

We must not mistake the motives of these painters. Metsu or Terborch does not paint a Music Lesson because he wants to show how a lady behaves with a visiting professor: he paints it because it is as good a peg as any to hang his artistic themes upon. Story-telling in the manner of Hogarth, Wilkie, Knaus, and Frith gives us little histories of all the people concerned; but

no such thing exists in Dutch art. The themes of the Netherlandish painters do not throw the onlooker's mind back to the previous history of the characters, nor do they anticipate the future. They are simply isolated incidents of a very ordinary existence, with no dramatic force to speak of. Their quiet, gentle domestic air leaves the mind ample freedom for the appreciation of the great charm in their presentment. Art for art's sake was at a high pitch in this golden age of picture-making.

There were of course a great number of "doctor" pieces, and others with a spice in them, done in imitation of the style of the greater masters; and it is possible that these had a public on account of their subject-matter. And yet one can hardly think that subjects so often repeated would find acceptance on that score alone. Teniers, father or son, may have sought patronage for his tavern scenes amongst those to whom tavern interiors were familiar; but even these are more remarkable for their gentle satire and their outlook on life than for sentimentality or mock heroics. And who can look at Ostade's incomparable "Alchymist" or Chardin's "La Fontaine" in the National Gallery without being assured of an artistic impulse in the painters.

There is no reason at all why the humanism that comes into genre painting should not be allowed to make its legitimate appeal to the people. What is to be avoided is the preponderance of literary motive over the artistic. The greater the art in the picture, the more room is there for a literary theme. The works of John Pettie had so strong a foundation in artistic merit that they were able to bear a large superstructure of dramatic material. Likewise the works of Hunt and Good were well felt and

soundly painted, their humanism and character did not militate against their artistic rendering.

In point of subject-matter alone, it is not a far step from the best style of genre painting, where two or three figures are employed to convey an artistic message, to the works of Millet, with their two or three peasants; or those of our own Clausen with their gleaners and barn-workers. Different as are the aims of these artists from those of older masters, they share the same interest in human life. This interest forces an entry into all work which includes the figure as anything more than a small accessory. For the uninitiated multitude it may be used as a means of introduction from the still-life art of Metsu to the humanism of men like Hunt first and then Millet; and from Millet to the landscape subtleties of Clausen.

As I have tried to show in an earlier chapter, it is too much to expect the greater public who know nothing of art to understand and love displays of technical painting. That sort of art is too much like a medicine to them. What they ask for is an invigorating drink with a tang of some interest in it—bitter or sweet. This every other kind of art gives them freely. Poetry without the human interest is not too engrossing. What has made the public of Burns? What constitutes the spell of Homer? Art lies in the telling: and something must be told. When that something is simple and grand and elemental it is a help to art no matter how insistent it is. But let it be trivial and complex, fussy and elaborate, involving much machinery and paraphernalia, and art steps out, feeling that it is not wanted; that the tale can get on

better without it. So in truth it can, and always has done, and this is the great drawback to elaborate anecdotic genre.

During the last quarter of a century it has been customary for artists and critics to look down upon genre painting from a very high standpoint of art. Anything in the shape of a consistent theme of manners has been dubbed "literary," and a stigma has been supposed to lurk in the term. This is both unfortunate and unfair; not to say disastrous to art in the long run. It implies that all the principles and poetry of art are opposed to pictures dealing with human life, which would be an absurd contention. Whatever there is against genre painting is due to those who have painted it inartistically, not to the people who have been fond of it. Yet it is a very common thing to hear artists expressing impatience and scorn when people in exhibitions or at private shows evince more interest in the subject-matter of a picture than in its execution. It is not necessary to explain that in such cases the scorers are not the painters of the pictures.

The artist who is not able to put fine and elevated work into his literary subject unquestionably allows it to sink down to a low level. Admittedly that is a lamentable state of things for which there seems to be no remedy. But if such a painter, bad as he may be, can win a public on the strength of his clever tale-telling, it is surely better that he should continue to do so rather than that the public he wins should be lost altogether. Art can do no good by being too "fine" for the people. If it cannot fulfil the public demand the supply will be sought elsewhere. To-day the demand is being supplied

in the cinematograph and the picture postcard. Whilst, as in the old days, this supply was made by artists and by artists alone, there was always the opportunity open for the public to be affected by the art whilst it took its pleasure in the story. In the sixteenth century in Germany; in the seventeenth in Holland—the two brightest periods of people's art—there was a wide distribution of engravings. They were coarse at times perhaps; but they were art. To-day the people's pictures are not exactly refined either, and sometimes repellently mawkish; and they certainly have an infinitesimal modicum of art in them.

The love of hearing stories and seeing them enacted and painted is inbred in people of all climes. There is no blinking of that fact. It behoves painters to bear this in mind and to set themselves this problem, namely, to be human, as Dürer was human, as Rembrandt was human, as Schwind, Millet and Boecklin were human; and to be artists at the same time, as these were. It is not to be imagined that all painters can turn themselves round and equal these masters; but it is not too wild a suggestion to make that they should see their work from the point of view of these great yet simple masters, rather than play the superior person, renouncing their public and posing before their own narrow art circles as original geniuses with something quite different to say from what has ever been said before.

XIX

PORTRAITURE

Allegory in portraiture—Likeness—Synthetical and analytical methods—Impressionism in portraiture—Velasquez's "Admiral"—Rembrandt's "Old Woman"—Painters' Mothers—Holbein's "Ambassadors"—Moroni's "Tailor"—Facial Expression—Raeburn, Gainsborough and Lenbach—The handsome lady—Character: Reynolds's "Lord Heathfield"—Gesture—Mrs. Siddons by Reynolds and Gainsborough—Light and shade—Importance of lighting—Groups—Rembrandt and Hals—Placing the head—"The Pattern"—Pursuing eyes.

PORTRAITURE in its earlier periods was much concerned with allegory. Titian's "Flora" and "Vanity" are but portraits thinly veiled by fancy names. Lely and the painters of the eighteenth century, especially in France, robed their aristocratic sitters so that they might impersonate the symbolical goddesses of antiquity. Reynolds also was given to painting his ladies as vestals, muses, and graces. When the "grand style" fell from its supreme place in art its allegorical influence affected portraiture no longer.

A history of painted portraits would be a running commentary upon the styles of art throughout the centuries, for the impress of every phase has been taken by portraiture, even from such different modes as Pre-raphaelitism and Impressionism.

This does but imply the various ways in which the portrait-painter approaches his task. There would seem to be no reason whatever why all these different styles should not have equal rights; but there is certainly one standard by which they should stand or fall, and that is the proper presentment of the sitter's personality. A

portrait which, on account of some peculiar treatment, is not easily identified must be judged to have failed, whatever other merits it may possess.

But in that question of likeness there are also many standpoints ranging from the searching delineation of personalities as given by Dürer in the portrait of his father, a work of evident filial affection, to the character seized in the silhouette sketch of a modern impressionist. What must be utterly cast out as failures are the attempts of those who regard their sitters as mere models or lay-figures: those whose efforts are directed solely to a scholastic study of tones or tints without any regard for the sitter's character or personality. There have been ladies painted in conflicting lights, artificial and natural, who have obligingly sat whilst the artist has made a portrait not of themselves but of the moonlight or lamp-light on their costumes and surroundings. Others have allowed themselves to make a part of the *ensemble* of an interior, their faces receiving exactly the same amount of psychological portrayal as the shade of a standing lamp. Others again are allowed to lose their heads amongst sofa-cushions or fur rugs.

However much the advancements of painting, impressionism and *pleinairisme* particularly, may affect all other phases of art, their influence seems to be least beneficial in the domain of portraiture. Impressionism is synthetical, and one of its principles is to generalise detail. But although a portrait may be none the worse for having the convincing roundness and general realistic appearance which the synthetical treatment should give, it is also in need of the analytical view, the duty of which is to apprehend detail, to study moods, to pierce to the

inner spirit lying beneath the outer letter of resemblance. The effort which the painter makes towards the synthetical hampers any effort towards the analytical, which should have first place. This is the whole of the case against impressionism in portraiture, but it includes a host of matters of great importance.

With these facts in view we may perhaps hazard a reason why so few of the modern painters achieve that living breathing intimacy which characterises the works of Rembrandt, Van Dyck, Gainsborough and Raeburn. To-day our painters are much given to standing afar off and half-closing their eyes—a plan which results in excellent impressions but uninteresting portraits. It may even give admirably the illusion of a transitory glance at a living person; but portraiture demands something more than that, and something different. The friends of the sitter do not wish to be made to jump when they come into a room where the portrait hangs: they desire it to be one before which they can ruminate; one that will “almost speak”; one that suggests the life, the temperament, the affections, the power and the charms of the sitter.

Everybody knows the tale of Velasquez’s “Admiral Pulido-Pareja,” though perhaps few believe it. It is said that the king when in the studio, mistook the picture for the admiral himself and rebuked him for tarrying in Madrid when he had been ordered away. Perceiving his mistake he turned to the artist and said: “I assure you I was deceived.” If we suppose that the picture was standing back against the wall out of the direct line of sight, it is just possible to think that coming suddenly into the room and catching sight of it “out of the tail of the eye” one might have the momentary

illusion. Whether the tale be true or not it carries no commendation of the portrait as a portrait. That much more mighty work of genius, the Head of Philip IV. is painted on the lines laid down by Dürer and Holbein, to whose work it approaches in idea, although it anticipates the most modern presentment of tone and colour, together with a handling which defies the bravura of Hals, equals the certainty of Sargent, and echoes the feeling of Rembrandt. But this head was never schemed by Velasquez to create a mere illusion, and no good portrait ever is.

We are fortunate as a nation in possessing that masterpiece of the great Rembrandt which goes by the name of "Portrait of an Old Woman." One has only to gaze at the original for a moment to feel as surely in the presence of this old lady as was Rembrandt himself. One feels that one knows her; has watched her habits; listened to her experiences and studied her temperament. Here is a multitude of wrinkles and inexhaustible detail held easily within a breadth and largeness of form that is positively sculpturesque. Here is an Italian glow of mellow colour that is decidedly flesh-colour. Here is crimped lawn and muslin that is as luscious in hue as old ivory, but as smart and clean as the ruff of a Dutch woman of all people could be. It is curious to think that this obscure old Amsterdam lady whom nobody knows should come to be the best known unidentified lady in the world. Could she have had prescience of the fact during her sittings, what a thought it would have been to muse upon! An inscription upon the portrait shows the subject to have been 83 years old and the painter but 28.

It has been claimed for this portrait that it represents Rembrandt's mother; but the discrepancy between the ages would be some argument against this to say nothing of a non-resemblance to authentic portraits by Rembrandt and Dou. Nevertheless it is good enough to have been so, for an inscription "The Artist's Mother" is usually tantamount to saying "The artist's best portrait." It was so in the case of Whistler. It is so to an extraordinary degree in the case of G. A. Story, A.R.A. whose work now hangs in the Tate Gallery, and in countless other instances.

This fact supplies an easy and incontrovertible argument in favour of the analytical method as opposed to the synthetical—if any were wanted. What accounts for the superlative effort and supreme result in mother portraits but reverent care and affectionate scrutiny? Anybody would do to sit for a study of superficial planes; but when it is a case of a mother, artists take the point of view of Holbein.

Holbein in his "Ambassadors" supplies an interesting example of symbolism introduced into portraiture. Absolutely German in its thoroughness, the delineation in this wonderful work claims for it kinship with the Windsor drawings, which are the *ne plus ultra* of drawn portraits, and of which the National Gallery Catalogue says; "Words can create no conception of the insight, the ease of draughtsmanship, the force united with delicacy, the freedom from all trace of mannerism, that characterise these transcendent works."

In the "Ambassadors" there is this easy and searching mastery of form throughout, the accessories being painted with a minuteness that is unusual even in other

works of the same kind. Yet this precision and literalism is not performed in a mechanical spirit; for there is a deep meaning in all the accessories which was easily read in Holbein's day. The picture is so replete with material that it may be worth while to give some of its official description. "To the left stands Jean de Dinteville in a rich costume of the period of Henry VIII. wearing a go'd chain and order, and, depending from his girdle, a dagger with a gold hilt and sheath. To the right George de Selve in a gown of mulberry and black, lined with sable. In the centre of the composition is a wooden stand, having an upper and a lower shelf. The upper shelf is covered with a Turkish rug, on which are several mathematical and astronomical instruments and a celestial globe. The lower case bears a case of flutes, a lute, an open music-book containing part of the score and words of the Lutheran hymn:— 'Komm, heiliger Geist,' a smaller book on arithmetics, kept partly open by a small square, a pair of compasses, and a terrestrial hand-globe. Under the stand lies the lute case. Conspicuous in the foreground is the *anamorphosis*, or perspectively-distorted image of a human skull." Of the latter item the theory is that it is a dainty conceit in the matter of a signature: a skull being a hollow bone—in the German, Hol Bein.

The wonder is that one may go as close as possible to study the miraculously painted detail; to read the hymn in the book, and the figures and markings on the instruments; yet at a little distance each object appears broadly, even impressionistically, rendered. This wealth of accessory objects has symbolic reference to the figures, which are not in the slightest degree robbed of their due importance. At a point of view

sufficiently removed to see the picture as a whole the small detail disappears in the complete effect. The entire suppression of the detail would have added nothing to the general breadth.

There is a vast difference between the intellectual effort of painting a work such as this and the superficial accomplishment of the society portrait-painter of to-day.

Of Moroni also much the same might be said as to thoroughness. The "Tailor" (National Gallery) is unsurpassed for ease and directness of execution, and yet it gives the man so truthfully and fully that one could form an estimate of his character just as one does upon first acquaintance of a living person. He is a gentlemanly and well-to-do tailor. In this time tailors were evidently not the Starvelings they were in this country according to Shakespeare. But then this one was probably a citizen of Venice, the richest port of the world. His handsome ring alone testifies to his prosperity. The tailors who wear fine rings in these days are not those who do the actual cross-legged work; they do but *sit* in rings. There is an air of naturalness and modesty about this pose which is very charming. He is not ashamed of his shears. As a rule trade objects are barred in portraiture because most people avoid the signs of trade, but will swagger proudly with test-tubes, documents, palettes, musical instruments, swords, and so forth. Here the shears give rise to the alert pose. A person whose life is made up of thought and action may very well show purpose by displaying a book, a sword, or other accessory of his calling—so long as it is one of the polite professions.

It is facial expression which after all is of paramount importance in portraiture; and to discover it to the sitter's best advantage and to give it, to the life, should be the chief aim of the portrait-painter.

When a portrait *lives* by its expression, many faults that may exist in other directions are condoned; but however faultless a portrait may be in technical matters, it can never arrest and stir the spectator if the face is merely a mask, even a smiling or a frowning mask. Raeburn particularly has shown how great is the fascination of a truly rendered expression. The faces of his Doctors and Professors are quiet and placid, but each one reveals the thought behind it. Likewise there is mind and heart in the look with which Gainsborough's ladies regard us. This matter of expression is, in fact, the touchstone of portraiture. Lenbach endeavours to find the soul of his sitters in the eyes, and whether he always does so or not, at least he always puts it there. But overflowing with vitality and keen intellect as his sitters are, we feel that they always come before us in a histrionic mood.

This manner of Lenbach is, in a curious way, the psychologically impressionistic manner. In his own portrait he generalises all but the eyes, which are sharp and particularised accents. The painters of the past gained more by a patient realism. It is in the muscles and tissues of the face as a whole that the character, temperament and life's experience are written. Life is a chisel for ever carving our history upon our faces. The emotions which men feel send their influence along the nerves which actuate the facial muscles; therefore the emotions which preponderate have those muscles most often under control, so that in course of time our

faces become moulded to signify the emotions that make up most of our character. This facial revelation is a matter of detail in form, lines and planes, of which the *nuances* are so subtle as to be almost elusive.

The impressionistic shorthand statement of the superficialities of a head does not seize such subtleties. It may give a well-modelled head with textures and tints represented in a way that simulates a rapid view of the real thing surrounded by light and air. It may give also the salient characteristics of animation, vigour, or any other simple phase that can be easily recognised—in fact the rapidly painted portrait is usually animated—but it cannot show us the soul. That is the work for the analytical view not for the synthetical.

There is, nevertheless, a style of face that is in need of very little expression, and that is the handsome face. In fact, such faces are as a rule vacuous. All the portraits of a certain lady, who was, in her heyday, the nearest approach to the classic ideal of any professional beauty, show her to be devoid of any claims to expression. The best period of Greek sculpture is, indeed, without facial expression. Character implies a departure from the normal: mere beauty must necessarily be the exact normal of an accepted canon or type.

Character is manifested in the pose of a sitter to a greater extent than seems to be believed judging from the number of comfortable poses one sees. It is forced upon the mind that the slowness of the painter is often at the bottom of the very settled-down and abstracted look common in the mass of portraits, and it is a general rule that the swift executant who works in a sort of painter's fever produces more active poses

and more animated expressions than is possible with the careful painter who wants a great many sittings.

It is of course an obvious fact that not everybody who has an animated bearing is at all times displaying it. In the case of a soldier for example, there are many moments when his bearing is not in the least military; but there are more reasons for painting him with a military bearing than without one. In Reynolds's "Lord Heathfield" in the National Gallery, the firm grasp of the key of the fortress of Gibraltar in the hands of the defender of that citadel certainly lends an inspiring air to the pose of the subject: Public characters, such as energetic members of Parliament, explorers, and so forth, are subjects demanding a pose that shall stamp them as men of action even in the eyes of those who know nothing of them.

It is easy in a pose of energy to make artistic faults. Gesture is therefore usually eschewed. Directly actual gesture comes in, mere portraiture is sacrificed to dramatic considerations.

This point is illustrated perfectly when comparing the portraits of Mrs. Siddons by Reynolds and Gainsborough. By the employment of gesture, to say nothing of the introduction of the two symbolic figures behind the chair—Reynolds gave us the stage Siddons impersonating the Tragic Muse. Gainsborough was more far-seeing. His picture shows to posterity what it could only thus learn about her; her natural charm, her beauty undisturbed by assumed emotion. He has done this without flattery or pandering to seductiveness. He chose to endue her with all the lofty repose and dignity possible, and in this way he has shown her much

more movingly as a tragic muse than did his rival. Both these works are in the national collection.

A good painter tries to preserve the dignity of the sitter of either sex. If the person's carriage is one of consequence it may be concluded that dignity and importance is a cultivated characteristic, and such persons will not be flattered by a result that does not show it.

The expressive power of light and shade is of great value in portraiture. Rembrandt relied upon it very largely as a means of emphasising character, and also as a means to secure synthetical effect. His "Bittern Hunter" (Dresden) shows the man's face in a cast shadow, except for one cheek, which is left highly illuminated. Likewise the "Boy Singing" (Vienna) has his face in deep shadow except the temple, cheek-bone and nose. This subject is probably a portrait of Rembrandt's son Titus; but the work has not been approached in the spirit of pure portraiture, otherwise it would have been less impressionistic, as all Rembrandt's true portraits were. His figure subjects and costume pieces are exercises in light and shade effects. Velasquez however, allowed his impressionism to come into his portraiture. The other extreme is represented by Holbein whose portraits, especially the drawings in the Windsor series, are very evenly treated as to lighting. Expression in his case was by subtleties of form defined by the most sensitively-drawn contours.

Where there are arrangements for altering the direction of light in studios the painter can at will either reduce to a minimum the modelling upon the faces of

sitters or exaggerate it to the utmost strength. This is evidently a great power in his hands—a power for the enhancement of character as well as for the refinement of roughness.

The interest and charm of the wrinkled and intelligent face of Dürer's father lies in the frank portrayal of every furrow, facet, and plane of the fine old face. A diffused lighting would have upset all this, and a strong light from one side opposed by lights reflected into the shadows from the other would have confused it.

In the case of a seared old dowager who is ashamed of her wrinkles, no doubt, the only thing to do is to light them so that they appear at their minimum; but the same method is very frequently employed for subjects in no such need, such as young women and children. A young child's soft skin and smooth flesh, its melting planes and rounded contours, are in no more need of diffused lighting than a billiard ball would be. On the contrary their beauties are enhanced by being treated in such a way that the delights of the modelling gain their utmost chance.

In studios built upon the greenhouse principle it is possible to get light upon all sides of the figure in imitation of an outdoor effect. Such studios are valuable for figures supposed to be engaged in open-air pastimes. The lighting of figures in them is naturally very highly complex, and may give a lot of trouble for doubtful results. The effects may be very novel and charming; but unless the painter is very much of the artist he had better rely upon the old traditions of lighting tested and tried by painters all through the ages and never yet



Franz Hals

GOVERNORS OF ST. ELIZABETH'S HOSPITAL
(Haarlem, Museum)



Rembrandt Harmensz van Ryn

THE SYNDICS OF THE CLOTH MERCHANTS
(Amsterdam, Royal Museum)

The value of a common interest to give homogeneity is shown in both these groups, but particularly in the Rembrandt.

weighed and found wanting. These traditions favour a simple scheme of lighting.

One often sees examples of lighting a full face too much from the side so that an aggressive line of light strikes the ear and passes round the head. Has the ear the best claim to be emphasised in a portrait? It is conventionally supposed that the eye and brow are the seat of the mentalities and can best stand the emphasis of the highest light. One may get novel and arresting effects from lighting the head from below or behind, but they are unusual and therefore make likeness the more difficult of recognition.

With regard to groups, it would appear that the greatest difficulty lies in the direction of a proper unity of interest. It is not at all easy even with but two or three figures having equal claims to prominence to combine them satisfactorily in one picture. To suppress one of them by any available means would be fatal to the painter's interests. He has to put them all practically on one plane, and to give each something like a fair share of lighting.

To secure a proper unity of purpose in the sitters the great masters saw to it that every member of the group was actuated by a common interest. Few painters, excepting Rembrandt, have been so deft at this as Franz Hals, who seemed to like tackling such problems.

His several groups of "Officers of the Archers of St. George," are evidence of his successful ingenuity in this respect. Nevertheless, I submit his "Governors of the St. Elizabeth Hospital" (Haarlem) side by side with Rembrandt's "Syndics of the Cloth Merchants" (Amsterdam) in order to show how the greater master,

by the simple device of making his sitters look outward towards him, gave his group even more unity, thereby securing more repose for his picture than Hals achieved for his.

There is a point of difference often seen between modern portraits and those of the old masters. The former are frequently designed more with a view to a decorative purpose than were the earlier ones. The old masters seem to have thought first and foremost of the head. They gave it the place of honour and plenty of room. Van Dyck showed the nicest judgment in these matters. Recent portraiture frequently dallies with new schemes in design. Sometimes the head is found close up to the top edge of the field, where it usually appears relatively too small, surmounting a superabundance of clothing. Or it may come in one of the corners, with the skull trepanned by the frame. At other times the whole subject is within the lower half of the field, looking as though it had slipped down. This arrangement loudly asks for a trimming off of the upper background.

For whatever reason these fanciful schemes are adopted, there seems to be no argument on the score of beauty and fitness that would justify their preference to the older methods. The reason for putting the head of a portrait somewhere near the middle is a logical and instinctive one, for a thing cut off from its surroundings and enclosed, enshrined, so to speak, for inspection or admiration, would in the ordinary way be rather ceremoniously placed at equal distances from the enclosing boundaries. Supposing any ordinary person were asked to hold an empty picture-frame before the



Photo. Hanfstaengl

Rembrandt Harmensz van Ryn

JOHN SOBIESKI, KING OF POLAND
(Petrograd, Hermitage)

In spite of its ascribed title, this portrait is probably but one of the many costumed variants of the painter's own likeness. It is finely designed to fit the canvas, and the background is masterly in its losing and finding of the contours of the figure.

head of a living person, he would unquestionably hold it so that the head appeared in the middle. The artist likewise responds to these instinctive promptings, but his sensitiveness and training lead him to make two slight but important modifications. The first is to place the head a little above the actual centre, and the other is to allow more space upon the side towards which the sitter is facing.

The first modification is advisable because a mathematical central spot in an upright oblong always looks *lower* than the centre, and it is imperative that this fact should be allowed for. Moreover, the slightly higher position gives dignity and importance, and it avoids the mathematical accuracy which is insufferable in anything but a strictly formal design.

The second modification which the artist makes comes about, perhaps, from the feeling that what is ahead of one has more interest than what has been left behind. The space before the eyes of a sitter thus appears of more importance than that behind him, which can therefore well be of less extent. When this rule is not observed in practice an uneasy feeling arises that the sitter has moved along out of his proper place.

Both of these nicenesses in planning and proportion are exhibited in Rembrandt's "King of Poland."

'Where the portrait includes a good deal of the figure, design naturally plays a much larger part in the success of the work, and it is here particularly where those dallyings with new schemes to which allusion has been made, are most in evidence. Critics have recently discovered, or invented, a new term, namely "pattern" and its application has whetted the keenness of certain

young artists who wish to live up to it. For the employment of pattern is much more fitted to the portrait that inclines to the decorative, as modern ones do, than to those which incline to the psychological and analytical ideal. The latter are concerned with a naturalistic "losing and finding" against the background: the former to a boldness of mass relieved from the background. Accordingly as this mass is finely designed, the pattern of the work is good.

But both these styles are found in the old masters. In Velasquez the pattern becomes distinct because the tones are simple. Rembrandt, at the opposite pole, seldom chose the smart effect of the silhouette, preferring the deeper mental pleasures of subtlety, and therefore his works are not remarkable for their patterning. Moreover, he seldom gave the figure at full-length, which offers most scope for the pattern.

For the decorative purposes to which portraits are sometimes put; especially commemorative portraits in public places; a fine planning of pattern gives the work simplicity of effect which is of great value in its power of appeal.

But there is a danger that in the quest for pattern the artist allows the decorative qualities of his portrait to overweigh the psychological. It is certain that there are remarkably few soul painters in these days; but quite a large number who regard their sitters as objects for exercises in smart still-life painting, impressionism, archaic wall-painting, and even missal-painting with all its mediæval trappings of gold and so forth.

Something should be said here as to a very popular delusion regarding the eyes of portraits. One con-

stantly hears expressions of amazement that the eyes can be so depicted as to seem to follow every movement of the spectator. I have never seen this matter examined or explained; but of course the explanation is simple enough. Writers of thrilling tales make great use of the phenomenon. Their usual plan is to confront a benighted traveller with the pursuing eyes of such a portrait as he goes to bed in an antique chamber. If the reader of such an episode is sufficiently interested to experiment upon the portraits he himself sees, he soon finds that the mystery is no mere fancy of a story-writer's but a perfectly genuine phenomenon and not at all uncommon. It rests upon a confusion between the fixed perspective in the picture and the shifting standpoint of the spectator. It is by no means confined to eyes, for it may be seen in any design where the perspective lines are a strong feature. In the cartoons attributed to Raphael at South Kensington there is a remarkable example. The great size of these drawings gives one ample time to note an apparent change when passing by before them. The one which depicts St. Paul preaching at Athens has a flight of steps in the foreground¹ and these give the impression of facing the spectator as he approaches from one side. They seem to swing round as he moves. When he is immediately in front they appear, normally, as a receding flight of steps with lines vanishing to the centre of vision. As he still passes on and looks back at them they again appear to recede in a straight direction from his lateral position. This case is identical with that of the eyes. Nevertheless people do not seem to notice the phenomenon except in the eyes of a portrait. But

¹ As nearly as I can remember. The cartoons are temporarily removed.

the reason for that is not difficult to come at. The human eye has great significance for all mankind, even the unobservant. It is the organ which communicates something beyond speech, and in a language universally understood. The expression of the human eye is so infinite in its variations that any eye, drawn well or badly, will seem to coincide with some sort of human expression and will call up some shade of response in the mind. One result of such unfailing and immediate domination in the human eye is a kind of obsession exercised by a portrait, the spectator of which has a subconscious feeling of being in an actual presence. Anything like an optical illusion, therefore does not escape him in such a connection, whilst it may pass unnoticed in other matters although equally demonstrable.

To go back to Raphael's steps. If instead of being merely drawn upon flat paper they were there in the solid, the sides of them would come into view as we passed before them; for they would then be in three dimensions instead of two, and would change the relative positions of their different parts with every movement we made. But being flat things their relative parts do not change as we move, and therefore the steps look as though directly receding before us as much when we stand at the sides as when we are immediately before the middle of the cartoon. Steps drawn in firm perspective upon a colossal scale have such imposing suggestions of actuality that one half expects to observe in them the phenomena of actuality, that is to say, a relative change of parts consequent upon our movement. That change of parts would really satisfy us as to the stillness and solidity of an object in three dimensions. When we find that there is no change we

are baffled. We say, subconsciously: "Here is a solid thing that looks the same from either one side or the other." We conclude therefore that it must have moved itself in accordance with our movements.

The eye too has an imposing suggestion of actuality by reason of the obsession alluded to. When it is represented with the eye-to-eye gaze, as it is when the artist bids his sitter look him in the eyes, or when the photographer's sitter looks into the lens, then the eyes look out from the centre of vision, coinciding with the "parallel perspective" of the steps. Similarly if the spectator moves to one side he subconsciously expects to move out of their direct range, as he would were they actual eyes. When he finds that he cannot he is baffled here too, and says: "When I was directly opposite these eyes they looked into mine: now that I have moved they still look into mine. They must have followed me." Of course if there were a row of people across the room each would have the same eye-to-eye gaze.

XX

BACKGROUNDS

The Modulated-plain variety—Rembrandt's " King of Poland "—Losing and finding — Massing — Da Vinci's principle — Rembrandt's back shadow— The horizon—Lawrence's " Eliza Farren "—Technical and psychological aspects of the background—Landscape backgrounds—Pillar and curtain variety—Sitters' rooms—Whistler's portraits.

THE adjustment of the background lifts a mere figure-study up to the level of a picture. Its dark and light passages can be used for massing with those of the figure, for the betterment of the composition and to secure simplicity and strength of effect.

A background to a portrait is by no means an absolute necessity, and it can only justify its appearance when it distinctly enhances the effect. It does do so nine times out of ten; but, nevertheless, there are plenty of excellent works extant with no more background support than is afforded by the plain untouched paper or canvas.

From the absence of a background of any sort to the use of a gently modulated one is perhaps but a small step, yet a more important step does not exist in these matters. The advantages of a background are so well appreciated that there is a tendency to lose restraint and employ too much of it. An absolutely plain field without a suggestion of *nuance* is, of course, tantamount to no background whatever; but the slightest modulation is in most cases enough to make of such a flat backing a veritably ideal setting. I shall, for convenience, call this the modulated-plain variety. The

finest are found in Rembrandt's works. No other artist can be so subtle and tender and telling as he. In the so-called "King of Poland," the setting is really very little removed from a single tone. The light and shade of the figure make it appear more varied than it really is. By placing two fingers over the king this can be tested. Naturally enough, the effect is reactionary, and the king himself appears to be in fuller contrasts than he really is, by merit of what is around him. Here, then, the great value of backgrounds is amply instanced. The principle is a very obvious one. It is simply that the lighter and darker tones are used either to match or to contrast with those of the subject, chiefly those at the edges. And the particular advantage of this matching and contrasting is the gain of that quality known to artists as "losing and finding." The left arm is lost; the cap is lost in places; but the contour of the head is found, and that of the robe is delightfully half-and-half. Imagine the background perfectly plain, either dark or light; there would be an end—rather no beginning at all to this artistic subtlety.

The clever schemer or designer will also use these varying lights and shades in a cumulative way with similar tones in the figure, and thus achieve another artistic indispensable, namely, massing. Such massing may considerably affect the composition. What is now to be noticed is the much finer quality resulting in the contour by reason of its being here soft and there firm—lost and found. Without the background this would be impossible, for one could only lose and find contours upon a *blank* ground by making them faint in one place and strong in another, which would be illogical and opposed to realism. The figure must

be firm and round and like a solid living thing. With that fact established, then the background is allowed to approach it so closely in some parts that the demarcation between the two is lost, whilst in another place the two may be well relieved. These extremes embrace, of course, all the intermediate degrees of merging and melting.

The painter should be wary of a too forcibly modulated support. He must not forget that where he wants relief, his background only furnishes half the variation from the mean; for the tone of the figure furnishes the other half. An infinitely small variation in tone is able to effect quite a sharp contrast.

It is a question of artistic taste as to where relief should be lost and where found, and, as such, it cannot be discussed. But an excellent tradition upon this question exists in the works of all the masters of painting. So good and useful is it that it has become almost indispensable, and in the few cases where an opposite method is adopted the result causes a touch of artistic regret. The tradition is that the darker side of the figure should lie upon the lightest tone of the background, and *vice versa*. This principle, formulated by Da Vinci four hundred years ago, has always held, and does to-day. The contrast thus set up need be no more than sufficient to emphasise the important parts, which are usually in the head.

There is another useful tradition in backgrounds, much favoured by Rembrandt. This is to allow a darker tone on the background that may pass for the shadow of the sitter. It occurs not directly against the sitter, but at the opposite side to that of the light patch of the background. The great gain in building

up the design and composition of a picture by the added help of the cast shadow will be seen by a glance at the "King of Poland" where, it may be presumed, the shadow behind the baton to the right is thrown by the figure. It suggests space and air.

Just another look at the incomparable "King of Poland." It will be seen how fine and strong the lighting is; how the masculinity and inexorableness of the soldier and ruler are characterised by the forceful modelling and relief of the features. To have obtained this amount of force without a background, the contrasts in the tones of the face must have been stronger, and would then have been likely to open the door to all sorts of defects; hardness, harshness, sacrifice of the proper tones of the flesh, and general want of harmony. But by placing against all that shadowed cheek a lighter tone of the background, Rembrandt saved himself these dangers, and was able to give to all the delicate modelling and reflected lights in the dark parts a broad and generalising quiet depth of tone, simply by the power of contrast in the background. The virtue of contrast is much more a mental than a physical affair. It is the spectator's vision that sets these alternating tones in such valuable antagonism.

In the chapter on Decorative painting reference has been made to the horizon and its place in a composition. The horizon in portraiture is not less an important matter. In like manner, to avoid the loss of dignity in their portraits, painters have at all times used a platform about eighteen inches high, called a "throne," upon which the sitter was placed. This secured the foreshortening of the lap. Especially is this required

if the portrait is more or less one of state, such as an official in robes or a lady in full dress or in character. It is not, perhaps, so necessary if the pose is a domestic one, or one where a writing-table is employed, because in such a case the mind makes due allowance for looking a little down on the sitter, since that is the way the figure would be seen when so engaged. But it is better to err on the other side, for nothing looks more ignoble than a bird's-eye view of a person's scalp, shoulders, and lap; and a fine pose under such conditions is impossible. With children the case is different. They are so often near the floor that we do not regard that view of them as undignified.

The horizon, if it is suggested or simulated in the painted background, should agree with the actual one fixed by the eye of the artist. Unfortunately, this is a common source of error. In Lawrence's charming "Eliza Farren" (National Gallery) the horizon really comes somewhere at the level of the lady's bust; but it is represented as somewhere near her knees in the background. Consequently she looks gigantic. Such trifling faults make a work unconvincing to the uninitiated, although they cannot explain why.

A background to a portrait should serve two purposes. It should have first a technical relation to the figure and secondly, what might be called, for want of a better term, a psychological relation. In its first capacity it offers masses of light and shade, and passages of colour which join with those of the figure in completing the design. This aspect of the background is indispensable in cases where the figure possesses insufficient material in itself for a comprehensive design.

In its second capacity it ministers to the mood of the figure and possibly explains the action and expression of the sitter, or gives them special meaning or emphasis.

In a good portrait both these aspects of the background should be happily and thoughtfully combined. As an instance of this combination Reynolds's "Lord Heathfield" may again be referred to. The lowering clouds and wreaths of battle-smoke serve both as technical and psychological supports. The ruddy complexion and the red coat are both enhanced by the foil in the dark grey colour, whilst the pictorial suggestions, including the cannon, undoubtedly lead the mind to regard the pose and action as things immediately concerned with the warrior's temperament and prowess.

There is one difference between landscape and interior backgrounds which is perhaps inevitable, and that is that the landscape background seldom seems to be an environment, but often something behind the figure. An interior, on the other hand, may be made a true environment with the aid of furniture; but the air of domesticity that attaches to this kind of background does not suit every description of portrait. It is perhaps for this reason that the time-honoured pillar and curtain holds its ground even to this day, and with good effect. Its necessarily large scale places it nearly, or quite, upon the same plane as the figure. The vertical lines of the pillar are usually of great use in supplying strength and firmness of line for the composition; whilst the curtain and its folds supply a broad mass of tone and colour as well as a system of radiating lines.

Nevertheless, there is something so decidedly impersonal and stereotyped in this variety of background that it is hardly suitable for any but state portraits; its psychological suggestions being entirely those of pomp and circumstance.

Sitters of marked individuality have always been painted with happy effect in their own rooms instead of in a studio, and when the work is well done no method has a more popular appeal.

But there are cases where the interior background utterly fails upon the psychological side. In the hands of artists of great reputation, such as Whistler, the failure is likely to be denied by some and condoned by others; but the fact remains that a mere wall "parallel to the picture-plane" and without any "way out" or sense of space such as further planes would give, is not a satisfying background for a full-length figure, although a seated one. In Whistler's "Mother" the wall is broken by a straight curtain and a picture-frame; in the "Carlyle" there are two pictures hanging on the wall; the lower one about eighteen inches from the floor; and a dark skirting-board appears in each. The idea in these backgrounds is deliberately opposed to space. There is no treatment to introduce even a modulation in the tones. Flatness alone prevails, and any sensation of a *room* is neutralised. Indeed all Whistler's portraits seem to place the sitters in a passage or corridor rather than in a room, and there they seem to be distinctly *in front* of their setting. The paucity, or perhaps asceticism, of the flatness idea culminates in the figures of the "Mother" and "Carlyle," especially the latter. Both sit in profile close against the wall—a position which no sane

person would take up in real life. The *ensemble* is therefore unconvincing to the last degree. The figures are clearly outlined, silhouetted one might say, which is a further obstacle to ideas of roundness and three-dimensional space. The head of Mrs. Whistler redeems these shortcomings; but technically and artistically the flatness of these portraits can only please that limited portion of the public who like to be tickled by the mixing up of ideas, such as trying to make a large oil-colour portrait assume the dainty fancy of a Japanese fan. The psychological aspect of these backgrounds is at zero.

Of course Whistler had his imitators, and the world has in consequence seen many flat portraits and profiles close against a wall, treated in a manner that halts between Japanese conventions and the incipient impressionism of the "Admiral" of Velasquez. But it is difficult to believe that modern painters can be, in their hearts, so afraid of a healthy roundness and depth of space. Were there anything to deplore in the perfect realisation of Rembrandt's "Shipbuilder and his Wife" which the late queen lent to the Royal Academy in 1899 one might understand a revulsion from such methods of expression.

Whistler further supplies a rather amazing instance of the mixing of methods in portraiture. The more impressionistic the works are the less good they are as portraits, which is what one would expect. After the "Mother" he rarely approached again the psychological aspect of his sitters. His "Carlyle" is utterly beside the mark as a portrait compared with Millais'. In "Miss A. M. Alexander," now on loan at the Tate

Gallery, the figure is impressionistic; but the pot of flowers many feet in the background is painted in sharp and exact detail. What particular attitude of regard this demands from the spectator it is hard to discover. The painter's own theories would determine that under their conditions, the pot of flowers was the motive of the picture and "Miss Alexander" a mere foreground accessory. There is a shadow almost as high as the figure cast upon the wall background, which is nevertheless about four feet away. Thus is naturalism again thrown to the winds.

It is difficult to understand how an artist possessing such intense feeling and subtlety as to paint the exquisitely true and lovely *nocturnes* could produce such specious work in another branch of art.

The portraits of Whistler are excellent examples of what the public mind is so little interested in as not to care whether it understands or not.

XXI

THE LEGACY OF PHOTOGRAPHY

Early reputation and popularity of photography—Combined prints—Influence of photography upon engraving—Its literalness affects the art of painting—Exhaustive detail—Pictorial photography—The photographic point of view—The long foreground—Scale—Instantaneous exposures—Muybridge and Géricault—The Parthenon Frieze—Primitive stag drawings—Unamenable shapes—The bird's-eye view—Redundant matter in pictorial views.

WHEN photography first surprised a wondering world, it was believed and asserted that art was doomed. The sun-picture was able to produce in a day records of amazing fulness and accuracy such as the most assiduous painter or draughtsman could not have produced in a period ten or twenty times as long. What charmed people of those days was the exhaustive detail displayed by the photograph. Nothing was missed. The fleeting expression of the human countenance was perpetuated with unfailing exactitude. Portrait painters at any rate were considered to have seen their most prosperous days. With the advent of the Daguerreotype this part of the prophecy seemed likely to be fulfilled.

The miniaturist was certainly put out of employment when the *carte-de-visite* became popular, placing small portraits within reach of the humblest by reason of its cheapness. It is only within recent years that the miniature has again struggled to the place in popularity it formerly enjoyed.

In due time the world recognised its great mistake in confounding mere record with artistic presentment.

As to the great advantage held by the photograph of missing nothing, people eventually grew tired of seeing nothing missed, and turned again to the artistic rendering of pictures that missed a good deal with advantage.

Compared with its rapidity to-day, the photograph was at first a slow process. As yet enlargements were few and the applicability of photography was limited to views and portraits. But still assured of its pictorial mission, enthusiasts attempted elaborate pictures by its agency. They took unlimited trouble and exercised boundless patience in rehearsing sitters and models in their parts, and in building up or arranging a *mise-en-scène*. By combining the result of different negatives on one print, they achieved all that was possible in a genre picture except the one indispensable thing which makes a monochrome picture worth looking at, namely, artistic quality. In fact it was all excellent photography, but doubtful art.

Only a few painters of the day took up the matter to any extent, and they were probably impelled by the idea that the camera could be used profitably as a labour-saving resource. But although few painters adopted photography as a profession--the only well-known ones being David Octavius Hill, who took it up to obtain likenesses for a large portrait group; and Rejlander, a Swede—photography has developed in the hands of three classes of people; one class called artistic photographers, another the professional portrait and view takers, and the third amateurs who simply wanted to amuse themselves by recording everyday events. The last are by far the most numerous to-day, and do not bother at all about art. The first class still

exist, as a comparatively small but enthusiastic body, doing, in their own way, excellent and charming work.

In the meantime the scientific application of photography had increased wonderfully, and it is rather a puzzle to think what scientific research would now do without it.

By its agency a revolution was worked in the art of engraving. The wood-block became suddenly obsolete and a time-honoured process, capable of the utmost strength and feeling, was instantly forgotten and became practically a lost art. The "Zincograph" and the "Half-tone" block now reign supreme, whilst intaglio methods of engraving have received fresh impetus from new means invented by the aid of photography.

This is not the place to go into the sorrows and joys of that mighty change; but its great bearing upon artistic illustration cannot be passed without reference. In the old days when wood-engravers were paid any sum up to £50 to reproduce a drawing for printing purposes, the publishers took care that the drawing was worth the money spent upon it. To-day when the publishers spend twopence a square inch on reproduction, it scarcely matters what sort of stuff is placed before the engraver's camera.

It is more than likely that the literalness of the early photograph was the cause of a new standard in works of art. We know that it charmed; but there is nevertheless no positive evidence that painters in the forties and fifties experienced any sudden conversion due to photography alone. Wm. Dyce, Sir Noel Paton, the Pre-raphaelite school and others had thrown over the

suave generalities of the painting of the time, which except in the hands of the greatest had grown academical, and they had turned to certain material aspects of nature, which they pursued with determined painstaking, in the belief that realism was a noble duty to their art. This chiefly took the form of exhaustive detail, which they practised in a reverent and humble spirit and with ceaseless zeal.

It was about the same time that photography with all its detail seemed to come out of Nature as a revelation of what Nature herself really was. It is possible that the painters of detail may have been influenced in their ideas by this, in the first place; for the effect of photography must have been stupendous. In these days it is difficult to form an idea of what the first prints must have meant to those whose life was spent in delineating natural things. If the artists of those days had already and alone made the first steps towards a faithful recording, the photograph must have been to them at once confirmation, encouragement, and pattern.

This particular school of painting did not represent the whole practice of art however; and there were plenty who still maintained the traditions of the broader school. The last days of Turner were absolutely unaffected by the discovery of photography, and continental painters were likewise slow to manifest any change. Nevertheless it is possible that the camera educated the public to a momentary love of detail, and this would certainly have reacted upon painters sooner or later.

But minute and inexorable detail ultimately wore out its fascination, and before the year 1900, that is to

say in about fifty years from the first date of photography as we know it now, photographers themselves had realised that the capacity for detail was but a very partial help where pictures were concerned. Since then the "pictorial photographers" have devised many means for avoiding detail altogether. Some are now as cranky to avoid it as their forerunners were to secure it.

Apart from the matter of detail photography has exerted an influence slowly and insinuatingly upon the painted picture, and there are two or three characteristics of modern art that may be traced to this influence. One of these is the point of view.

Either by carelessness, or want of knowledge, or wanton departure, the point of view of the camera was, as often as not, entirely different from that of the painted picture. The pictorial photographer at first recognised this and endeavoured to make his picture as much like the painted one as he could; but upon the advent of the rapid plate and the rapid lens instantaneous exposures became the most frequent, and their haphazard selection of subject resulted in altogether new and strange compositions. It was due perhaps entirely to this fact that the long foreground came into fashion in painted pictures; though now it appears to be passing out of favour again.

The best landscape painters have always delighted in a large sky which means a relatively low horizon and a foreshortened foreground. The camera introduced a reverse state of things in every particular. This came about partly by the unconscious turning down of the hand-camera towards the ground, and partly

by the old lingering of taste in the photographer who likes to see everything nicely made out on his focussing screen. In the latter case the larger scale of the foreground objects showed up the charms of forcible sharpness very seductively, and so the "operator" was induced, no doubt quite unconsciously, to include as much of the foreground as possible. Towards this beguiling the concentrated and enhanced colour of the images on the screen had possibly much to do. It follows that the foreground objects were badly out of scale and often quite unpictorial when thus seen in "cold blood" in the resulting monochrome print. But these prints, in their millions, each did their little part in making people accustomed to this pictured aspect of things, where a foreground is shown almost up to the spectator's feet; where lines of perspective spread out rapidly as they approach towards the front; where stones, weeds, posts, and every other object assume an arrogant importance. What becomes of the other parts under these conditions is sad to see. They are literally nowhere.

It may be asked whether this is not after all a perfectly natural vision. The answer is that whatever men may do under stress of mental agitation, they do not bend their sight to the ground when they are out for scenery, as the picture-maker presumably is. It is when the eyes are lifted in admiration of nature that the foot stumbles against the stones and plunges into puddles—sure proof that the immediate foreground is out of mind. The scheming with a low horizon is therefore a more rational result than the photographic long foreground.

Further, except in special cases the amateur photo-

grapher's lens sets up a much more variable scale than does the eye. It relatively diminishes the size of distant things and exaggerates those that are near. So that even were it admitted that the eye does apprehend these foreground objects, it would not be to the same extent, because of their relatively smaller size to the eye. Being therefore a non-human view, it becomes for that reason a false view judged by human standards. This is a point rarely admitted by photographers, who maintain that the lens is perfectly correct according to its powers and capabilities. But it must be admitted that although it may do its duty unexceptionably, its work is wrong work judged by the ultimate standard, the human perceptions. The veriest child knows that the fascinating views which he sees through either end of an opera-glass are not true to what he sees without it. That explains his delight. Painters likewise, would not have adopted deliberately, unless for special reasons, the pattern thus set by the photograph; but by growing accustomed to the new idea, their own have gradually become leavened; and so we have seen in recent years many a painted picture of a village that is all road, with geese standing on each other's backs, so to speak, and a row of houses or trees at the top of the picture which leaves just room for half an inch of sky. In such works the ground always appears to run up-hill.

Already painters have arrived at the point where they will give us a distant landscape of tiny scale and enormous figures in the foreground reaching, at half-length or full-length, from the bottom to the top of the picture. Such things are often seen at the exhibitions of pictorial photography; but perhaps their origin lies

in the hand-camera. Our newspapers print anything that is of topical interest, and the ready ten-and-sixpence reward encourages "snap-shotters" to make an exposure upon anything that goes on in the shape of an "event." At this pastime there is usually little time for picking and choosing. The news editors do not ask for art: they ask for records of events, and they get them; with back-views of foreground giants thrown in to the bargain.

Shocked as the eye is by these things at first, custom dulls the shock and we are soon ungrudgingly taking what is given us. The advocates of modernity in painting—modernity at any price—take this exaggeration of scale for a new, fresh and natural view, and proceed to paint something like it.

A certain and far-reaching result of the instantaneous exposure is the arrested-action appearance of figures in motion. The fascination of the earliest records must have been enormous. People were taken by storm when they saw games and sports with the legs and arms in "true action"; their babies' faces depicted to the life, howling or laughing; horses galloping, waves rolling, and so forth. All this opened new windows upon the workings of nature.

An American gentleman named Muybridge photographed horses galloping, in a series of views showing the position of the legs at various instants, from a particular moment until its recurrence, when the whole action had been completed. He managed this by having a number of cameras all placed ready in a row with cottons attached to their shutters. The horse as it galloped past the cameras broke the cottons and



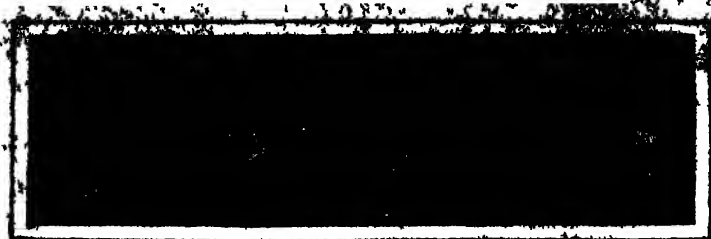
Photo. Hauslaengl

Jean Louis André Théodore Géricault

THE DERBY, EPSOM, 1821
(Paris, Louvre)

In this picture the artist, by a clever generalisation of the motions of the horse, calls up the idea of speed.
It has been thought that the artist has been influenced by the study of the movements of the horse in the Louvre.

THE LEGACY OF PHOTOGRAPHY



Instantaneous photographs of different phases of a horse's gallop.

thus released the shutters, and at each point an instantaneous view of the horse was registered as it passed.

On the strength of these photographs it was given out that the whole world had been making stupid blunders in these matters, and particular scorn was poured out upon a certain picture called "The Derby" by a French painter Géricault, which had hitherto been regarded as an extraordinary representation of life and movement. Géricault had by this picture confirmed a sort of tradition for galloping horses, and for years after, his version was copied and stereotyped as the only possible way of overcoming a great difficulty. He had represented horses with their legs stretched out before and behind; but Mr. Muybridge demonstrated that such a pose, even for the fragment of a second, was not true to nature. And in view of the photographs no one could honestly affirm that it was true to the nature of a horse physiologically; but it gave impressions of great speed, and that is what the painter tried for. Physiologically he overdid the action. He gave the horse the flying gallop natural to the hound and the hare. The feet of these animals work in pairs, fore and hind, when at their top speed; but the hound, when slowing down, has the independent movement of the four feet.

If we examine the dogs in the old paintings of hunting scenes, we find that they are invariably drawn in the same way as Géricault's horses. Sometimes the hind legs are on the ground and the fore feet in the air; and sometimes, especially in later works, and even in the hunting drawings of to-day, the legs are stretched out "fore and aft" and do not touch the ground at all. Géricault in applying this pose to the horse, may or may not have known that it was an incorrect use of the pose. Be that as it may, he probably thought that to adopt the hare action would be a licence on the side of speed. Indeed it is more than probable that if a horse were able to move his legs as quickly, relatively speaking, as do hares and hounds the action would develop the same characteristics. It is a logical conclusion, for we know that the dog that is not running at top speed falls into a stride resembling that of the horse's gallop,

Géricault's well-founded convention would never have been ousted by the photographic bunched-up legs, which look more like a jump than a gallop, but for the rather blind enthusiasm which instantaneous work invoked. Custom has now given this arrangement a permanent value as a symbol of rapid movement; but if a symbol was all that was needed Géricault's arrangement was certainly the more suggestive.

The painter's version was impressionism: the photographer's was literalism. One was the truth of a cumulative effect—synthesis: the other was the truth of an infinitely thin slice out of the continuous action—analysis. To Géricault, who had watched and gathered his impressions, it seemed that the main idea of the galloping of a horse was that of outstretched limbs

covering as much ground as possible; reaching forward and flung out behind. The hoofs appeared to be in the air; not on the ground; and the horse had the appearance of flying. The advantage of this idea was that it afforded a compromise between all the different stages of the action. This really embraced more truths of the whole and continuous action than any isolated photograph could give. One foot or more shown touching the ground by the photograph, perpetuated a relation of feet to the ground; but that perpetuation does not appear to the eye in the natural action, where every foot of the horse is for a longer time off the ground than upon it. Muybridge's photographs were only correct for the complete action when they were seen in combined effect by means of the special machine made for showing them; and that is a good argument for saying that any single and isolated view amounted to no more than a photograph of the horse struck suddenly dead in the middle of its career. If it stayed so until it rotted it could never appear to gallop.

It was next discovered that the horses on the frieze of the Parthenon were shown by the evidence of instantaneous photography to be much nearer truth to nature than had been supposed. They do in fact show an action very like one in the Muybridge series; but this fact, if I may say so, is of little advantage to Phidias. It would be interesting to know whether, before the advent of photography, scholars and critics regarded the horses of the Parthenon frieze as proceeding at the gallop or merely prancing. Do horses gallop in a procession? If they galloped at the Panathenæa festival what must have happened to the old men and the



A portion of the Parthenon Frieze, showing highly naturalistic action in the horses.

maidens who also formed part of the *cortège*? It seems quite obvious that these Parthenon horses are not galloping at all, but prancing, as high-bred horses will when restrained to the measured pace of a procession. Such an action would be much more easily observed than that of galloping, for the prancing horse rears just as Phidias has represented it, and the action is not too rapid for observant eyes.

Another instance of the blind enthusiasm which applied instantaneous photography as a test of truth



Part of an engraved antler twelve to fourteen thousand years old. It shows remarkable accuracy of observation and delineation.

to all things, is that of the representation of stags engraved upon an antler discovered in the cave of Lorthet, Haute Pyrénées; and now in the St. Germain

Museum. Mons. S. Reinach maintains that these stags display the realistic attitudes which photography has shown to belong to the gallop. This assumption is exciting enough when one considers that the primitive work of art in question belongs to the quaternary period which finished ten or twelve thousand years B.C. But without wishing to weigh my own inconsiderable opinion against that of so eminent an authority I beg humbly to suggest that the particular stag referred to—although its legs may be somewhat similarly disposed to those of the photograph—has them much more obviously disposed as those of a dead stag would be when lying on its side. It is much easier to imagine this primitive cave-man getting his ideas from a slain stag lying motionless before him than from the rapid action of life which man, never in the world's history, has been able to analyse by his own unaided observation.

It is to be doubted whether this stag would give the idea of its galloping to any one who had not first received the suggestion. Mons. S. Reinach, in his admirable lectures published in this country under the title of "Apollo," has this passage:—"Next comes another galloping stag in an attitude first revealed to us in modern times by instantaneous photography as applied to the analysis of rapid movement. An artist of our own day, Aimé Morot, first made use of the knowledge gleaned from photographs, and utilised this action in his horses. It was unknown to all artists of intermediate ages."

The passage is characteristic of the unconditional surrender with which the invasion of photography has been met upon all sides. No other thought, no other

theory, no other point of view was entertained before this supposed all-conquering harbinger of truth.

The psychological truth of impressionism is greater than the material truth of literalism as given by instantaneous photography. Men do not see the spokes of a rapidly revolving wheel; they see but the flash of light upon them. The instantaneous photograph shows us every spoke as we should see it were the wheel dead still.

Nevertheless, ever since Muybridge's time our draughtsmen have been fond of putting the legs of their galloping horses in a bunch, and the comic American draughtsman to-day draws his cats and dogs in the same way. It has become quite as much a stereotype as was Géricault's "rocking horse" formula. We are now so accustomed to the photographic pose that we accept it contentedly as a symbol of the rapid action of galloping. We also accept football players in contorted attitudes and violent disproportion of parts, as engaged in wonderful play; but they are really more crystallised than any drawing could make them. Our express trains are all standing still in photographs, and the smoke from their funnels is carved in solid and immovable material.

There is yet another result of the influence of photography upon the painter's art. In picture-painting the principle has always been adhered to that the shapes which masses take or make should be agreeable ones to the eye. More often than not, awkward and angular shapes are the rule in photography when no judicious selection has been made. Figures and the clothing upon them make queer and unlovely silhouettes; houses,

fences and such things occur with rigid lines and awkward corners quite unamenable to pictorial requirements.

These things too are allowed to tell in the later development of art. They look modern. They are something different from the things that pictures usually deal with, and these facts are enough for the novelty-mongers who eagerly adopt the unpleasantnesses of such features.

Sometimes the newest pictures display the optical arrangements of the bird's-eye-view order, wherein the spectator is supposed to look down from a high position upon chairs and tables, and the heads and shoulders of the people among them. This view, of course, involves the necessity of placing the more distant figures right at the top of the picture where sometimes we are enabled to see only the lower portions of their clothing. This may be all true to nature and executed with consummate artistic skill; but how far is it a normal view?

It must be understood that in such views the spectator is not supposed to be in an elevated position. He is on the floor level; but he sees with the turned-down camera view.

These things have the look of trivialities. A great and serious work of art would adopt the normal view and impression of an interior where one has instinctive ideas of the furniture standing firmly on the floor, and of space above; of the horizontality of certain planes (not the tilting which exaggerated and violent perspective gives); of the vertical steadiness of walls, and perchance of a glimpse of ceiling, impossible to a looking-

down view. All these aspects the photograph has discounted in men's minds.

Yet one point more. The unpremeditated exposure—or it may be the exposure for which there was no alternative—will often admit parts, corners, edges of things animate and inanimate which jut in upon the field of the picture and are in every way redundant and aggressive. It would scarcely be thought that painters would be weak enough to seek deliberately such features for their pictures. Yet that is what is frequently done; although it was never done before the advent of photography. Distortion, not uncommon in photography, artists have usually detected and avoided; and it is doubtful whether the distortion prevalent in the works of modern adventurers should be traced to photography.

In all these matters it is the abuse and not the use of the camera that is to blame; for the photographers of the better class, having judgment and discretion, avoid the pitfalls which hasty, inexperienced, and ignorant operators easily tumble into.

The few obvious usages of picture-composition are quickly picked up by photographers, who as a class very soon become much better informed upon these points than the average art-student. The mistakes and misfortunes of picture-making occur in two classes of photography; one is that of the ignorant beginner, who is to be excused; the other is that of the ambitious and superior "pictorialist" who scorns to do the usual thing, preferring to rank himself with "advanced" schools of painting. This class abjures photographic characteristics such as firm definition and naturalistic tonality and seeks to find an appeal for something that

halts midway between camera-work and hand-work but frequently misses the charms of both.

Apart from these unfortunate influences photography has been a faithful handmaid, a kindly mentor, and a valuable pioneer in the service of art. Further, it has been the means of attracting thousands to the beauties of nature, and once within that zone they have felt the sweet influence of art.

XXII

ARCHAISMS

The Indian, the Nursery, the Outline and the Inlay styles—Rationale of Outline—Outlines in water-colours and oil-colours compared—Modern abuses of outline—Its aid to incapacity—*Naïveté*—The “decorative” as a buckler—Illustrations—Mediævalism.

THE over-zealous following of a scientific realism already alluded to seems to have brought about its own revolution. It is possible to see in the same gallery examples of the most advanced work side by side with others that positively renounce all advancement whatsoever. Some painters who have “been through the mill”; that is to say, who have had the advantage of training and practice, purposely turn their backs upon impressionism and *pleinairisme* and all that those styles stand for, to invent renderings of things according to their own fancy, without any apparent creed or theory to justify them.

The very latest of these fancies is a kind of copying of the characteristics of Indian art, in all its barbarities, its vacuity of colour, want of naturalism and general woodenness. Another fancy resembles a nursery style, in imitation of the lisping attempts of untutored children of any age under eleven. Some painters affect a heavy blue-black outline round every object. Others paint flatly as if they were simulating inlaid wood. Another resource is the placing of figures in a more or less naturalistic setting; but denying them any light and shade, and of course giving them no cast shadows.

But of all these manners, the one that has been the most far-reaching is the abuse of outline. Illustration, decorative painting, even the easel-picture have each fallen beneath its yoke. Yet the proper use of outline is time-honoured and invaluable.

The man who draws with a point produces a line; and this line, more often than not, is sufficient to express his meaning. If he draws a line that represents the contour of a figure there is instantly set up in the mind an understanding that all within that line is part of the figure, and all outside it the figure's environment, although both are only the untouched surface of the substance upon which he has drawn.

This mental process is the prerogative and the principle of outline drawing. The line simply confines the form, but in so doing it gives meaning to all within the form; and—this is the chief point—it obviates the necessity of modelling within that form. This has always been well understood. In Germany many names have grown to greatness by the adroitness and refinement of works in outline alone; and in this country Flaxman will have a long-lived fame for similar work. Later, the talented poster-artist Mucha, has carried the manipulation of outline further perhaps than it has ever been taken before. Such men have used outline: they have never abused it.

Sometimes the outline gives emphasis to forms that might otherwise be lost in monotony of tone or colour. Such a plan was frequently adopted by Turner, and is occasionally seen in the water-colours of to-day; but it confirms in those cases, the principle of cutting off from their environment forms that are not otherwise detached.

The advantage that exists in the use of a fine outline to separate forms amongst washes of water-colour, is not present in the practice of oil-painting. The two modes are different in execution. In oil-painting the brush works more slowly and more directly than in water-colour, where it lays a tint over areas which may contain many forms impossible of differentiation in the fervour of the moment. In such contingencies an outline may prove useful. But oil-colour, by its greater weight, its impasto, and its quality, as well as the precise way in which it is applied, can itself do all that the water-colour occasionally has to let outline do for it.

Outlines in oil-paintings therefore, especially those of the blue-black, thick, furry description sometimes displayed in modern work, are distinctly aggressive and entirely unnecessary. Since outline is but a convention and represents nothing actual, except the juncture between adjacent masses, which is an abstract thing, not a concrete, how can it be of any use in a properly painted realistic oil-picture? In recent work it is often so thick as to impinge very considerably upon the objects represented. It has been thickened and dulled until all subtlety in it is impossible. It has been made to take on the slimy sinuosities of the glazier's leads in stained-glass work. It has been made so insistent that all other lines within the form it encloses have been rendered insignificant, with the result that roundness and modelling have been lost and flatness has resulted. Indeed, the augmented outline is one of the chief resources of the "decorator" for flattening purposes. He has but to take his most naturalistic and realistic study and surround it with

a line like a black clothes-line, and behold! — it is “decorative” *à la rigueur*.

We see, however, in the works of the old masters, that outline can be so expressive, so subtle, so nervous, as to answer every purpose of the graphic methods except colour. It is therefore all the more regrettable that it should be put to such base uses and invested with no more grace and virility than exists in a piece of bent lead pipe. In “decorative” design it is the sheet anchor of the incapable, for the thicker it is the more effectually it gives cover to puerilities of draughtsmanship. You may wrap up a piece of sculpture until its form is lost in the shape of the bundle; and with the same treatment a design that is at fault, even in proportion, can in these days pass muster if its outline is heavy enough to smother the drawing. Should it be a pen-drawing, it only requires that the background or the sky be filled in with solid black, and there is the stylish “decorative” drawing according to modern ideas.

But it is even more lamentable when men who have emerged from their student days, and can boast of something in the shape of a reputation, pursue certain curious and unexpected side issues from the forward line of progress into blind alleys that tend in a backward direction: blind alleys because they lead nowhere; backward because they affect the faults and failures which art has long outgrown.

The fact that these backward tendencies should be adopted by painters who have already proved their talent, skill and feeling, is a matter for continual surprise. When pressed for explanations of their work they have but one response, and that is, “*Naïveté*.”

Naïveté then is supposed to be wrapped up in defection! When a picture is sufficiently bad; when it subverts the eternal principles; when it belies nature, it is held to be naïve.

After all what does this naïveté amount to? If it were something tangible; if it were one particular manner, or a certain style of tone or colour, we might appraise it. But being, as it is, quite an abstract thing, its subtle essence escapes three-fourths of those who attend picture-shows. They only perceive the badness; and for that their obtuseness is held to be blamable. Supposing, however, that any real naïveté did result, would the thrill of delight following its discovery be commensurate with all the paraphernalia, the apeing, the perverseness; to say nothing of the awkwardness, the hideousness, that is involved in its production?

Painters of the naïve school manifest themselves in many ways. Some throw away all their draughtsmanship and scrawl in infantile outlines, pressing every little failing of the young child into service, even to the full eye in the profile face.

But it is in decorative art, so called, that they abound and flourish most. That misapplied, indefinite term "decorative" is used as a buckler for incapacity and insincerity. A whole town may be shocked with stupid and ugly things, but so long as "decorative" is written up over them criticism is supposed to be disarmed. In the chapter where an attempt has been made to deal with Decorative painting, a few of these archaisms have been pointed out. There are others also, but to enumerate them further would be tedious. They are sufficiently well-known.

Illustrations have proved a hot-bed for these modes of work, and it is to be deplored that the artists who draw for books and magazines should so often adopt methods which render illustration difficult. It must hamper an artist who honestly tries to give point and dramatic force to an author's situations to have at the same time to make his drawing look like a leaded window or a Byzantine wall-decoration. It is not difficult to demonstrate the fallacy of the principle that sends men raiding into distant fields of art in order to dress their ideas in solecisms. We may be legitimately amused by pictures, even of modern life, drawn in the manner of a church window or a piece of tapestry if we meet with them in the pages of *Punch* or otherwise in an obviously comic context and "atmosphere." A joker may do anything and be pardoned; but to pass such jokes off as serious work is to court the charge of insincerity in art. Insincerity in art is a heinous offence, which no true artist would or could commit. Of course there is no law of the land to prevent whoever will from fishing in the waters of art for popularity with the bizarre as a bait.

Other tricks which assume antique incompetence have already been alluded to in these pages. The most rabid reformer, the most mad schemer of new methods, provided that he is sincere in art, is to be preferred to the man who turns his eyes backward instead of forward. It is little short of amazing that men should dish up the letter of old work and offer it as the spirit; but it is more than amazing that there should be even a small public, to say nothing of journalists to encourage and praise them.

When it happens that a painter is himself several centuries behind the times in art education, he may

naturally find his own shortcomings very agreeably masked by those of the old masters he imitates. The immaturities, the haltings, the stumblings, the absurdities, oftentimes pathetic enough, of the early painters, afford him at once cover and licence. But this theory cannot apply to painters who, as we know, could do better if they liked. For such the only theory that presents itself is that they adopt a pose of mediævalism calculated to impress their public with the idea that they are specially constituted artists; that they see in the old blunders and absurdities some indescribable beauty to which modern art could never attain. They pose as having discovered and imbued themselves with this secret charm, and they put up their stiff, awkward and ugly figures, their childish drawing, their primitive vision of things, to be admired in our public galleries, whilst they stand by serious, with an assumed air of sincerity, allowing dear gullible "old ladies" of both sexes, and foolish uninformed, impressionable and self-deceiving students to persuade their better sense that what is before them is the real art, and that all else is but commonplace and banal.

We shall make a sad blunder in accepting even for a moment work done in these days, not in emulation of the earnest struggles of men in past ages, but in a spirit of mockery. If old work has indeed nothing more to teach us; if we fail to be in the least fired by its aspirations and attempts; if we are interested only in its failures; let us at any rate respect it for what it is. To seize what we are gracious enough to call its "quaintnesses" and exploit them for "gate-money" is disrespect and insult to our ancestors in art.

XXIII

FEARS AND HOPES

Demoralisation—Divorce between feeling and craftsmanship—Non-existent in poetry—Walt Whitman—Taking pains—The cult of the ugly—The ugly in primitive races—No ugliness in classical art—Its presence in the Gothic—The cause of vagaries—The adventurer—His friendly critics—No analogy between modern painting and modern music—The advocates of modern vagaries—Their false hypothesis—Fallacious argument of new requirements in art—Continued evolution in painting—Trend towards the spiritual from the material—Misunderstood art—The future—Changes of outlook due to science—The constancy of Nature—War and art.

THE reader who has perused these pages so far will have observed that the liberating and enlightening advance of art is in constant danger of abuse by many means. In the first place there are the sham archaisms and tricks of assumed mediævalism treated of in the last chapter. In the next place there are the outward modes of impressionism which many painters adopt without having experienced any inward conviction. This results in a kind of demoralisation of the executors and a discrediting of draughtsmanship. There is also the unhealthy fostering of ugliness for ugliness' sake, of which something will be said presently.

The demoralisation in art began when notions superseded accomplishment: when feeling, so called, began to be appraised without regard to workmanship. Directly ideas, hinted at or suggested, were held to be justification enough for a picture-frame, there was naturally no longer an obligation for artists to be good craftsmen also, since it was held to be no advantage

that the ideas should be actually realised. This new standard opened the flood-gates and let in the rush of dabblers, amateurs, and incompetents, many of whom were quite as well able to offer ideas and feeling as the sound craftsmen they came to compete with. From that time it was no uncommon thing to find in our galleries pictures that were exceedingly badly drawn and ill-conceived.

Good draughtsmanship is a thing which is self-evident. Proper adjustment of tones carries instant conviction. But feeling is a matter of momentary mood, both in the artist and in the spectator. It may affect some whilst at the same time it may leave others unmoved. It is therefore an extremely elusive thing to regard as a standard of excellence in a work of art. That very fact has proved a bad thing for art inasmuch as it has warranted expressions of opinion which no one could rightfully question. *De gustibus non est disputandum* has become a shield for the shamming connoisseur and critic, and, alas, for the commercial exploiter also. Any adverse opinion upon a feeble work can be opposed by appreciative remarks. "It appeals to me strongly" has become a favourite phrase in the new criticism.

In the past the art of painting rested securely and advantageously upon the artist's skill as well as upon his feeling. The two were equal essentials, and any work was held to have failed if it lacked either concomitant. The art of poetry has never recognised a divorce between feeling and craftsmanship. There are cases in plenty where either one or the other aspect of a poem has fallen below its requirements; but the work and the poet's reputation have always suffered in conse-

quence. To take the case of Walt Whitman alone, it is evident that the simple setting down of statements of thought, however noble and inspiring those thoughts may be, does not give the effort a claim to rank as a work of art such as "Kubla Khan" is for example; although in that fragment Coleridge sounds none of Whitman's clarions, nor gives the heart and conscience any thrills. Whitman's so-called poems are moral tonics merely. He is a prophet; and in accordance with principles already submitted in this book, art is no help—rather a hindrance—to such things as prophecy, exhortation, and admonition; and the clear understanding of this is probably the prime cause of Whitman's spontaneous method.

An artist in words does not put his prophetic mission above his art. A thought must be beautiful and true for him as for a prophet; but he does not rest content until he has wrought and hammered and polished his setting for the thought until it has gained its utmost value, force, and beauty. By choice of word; by elimination of all dross; by sufficient trial of syntax, he works and struggles till his skill and knowledge produce their best.

Such an analogy between poetry and painting held good until late Victorian times. Now the skill is no longer asked for, and the thought, being more elusive than the thought in poetry, exists almost entirely by grace of the imagination or assumption of the spectator.

There is much to be said for the old tag, attributed to Reynolds, that genius is the infinite capacity for taking pains. For in spite of the universally accepted fact that mere laboriousness cannot of itself make a

fine work of art, there is no denying that to the man of true talent it is better, more pleasurable, more satisfying to do a thing properly, with full application of all powers, than it is to do it carelessly, lazily and superficially. The careless scrawl, or the floundering daub of colour, is the distinguishing mark of the inept. The humblest sketch of the truly great has thought and properly directed effort.

This is an age of slightness in work. It is thought nothing derogatory to allow ill-considered, hasty, and inadequate sketches to go before the public. That public is expected to see in the loose generalisations and sloppy patches of colour the signs of a genius who "dashes off" his work. No greater fallacy exists. Men of great talent usually work with rapidity; but it is the rapidity of directness not of emptiness. They never work without thought and an effort. They would find it impossible to do so. The production, to the making of which no sincerity of purpose has gone, stands self-denounced as the work of one without talent. There is quite as much antagonism to art for art's sake in this direction as in any other.

It was pointed out in the opening chapter of this book that the modern mind is a jaded one: that it quickly tires of the best of things. There are numberless proofs that in many places it has already tired of beauty. People laying claims to artistic refinement surround themselves with ugly things which they like to call quaint: hideous toys in the shape of dogs and cats; dolls in the form of monstrous beings called "golliwogs," which at one time, a mother would have snatched from a child in horror rather than encourage it to con-

fuse such a thing with those that are natural and pretty.

Since the ugly and repellent has its cult, it is not surprising that art should catch some of its restless subversive spirit. There are indeed too many pictures already which appear to have been prompted by a desire to find inspiration in the hideous. The virus first found its way into art by means of black-and-white illustrations. To-day there are several painters who revel in the bizarre. They paint frightfully ugly faces in repellent subjects; they use deliberately awkward schemes of design; they apply discordant and violent tints, and all for no apparent purpose but to pander to a depraved taste which has sunk too low to be moved by what is natural and beautiful.

All through the ages men have been taught that art concerns itself with the beautiful; and it would seem that every branch of art has, with a few exceptions, done its best to live up to that reputation. Until the last decade or so these exceptions were only to be found as intentional departures into ugliness for special purposes. Primitive art produces ugly things either for a special purpose or because it falls short of the beautiful at which it aims. The ugliness with which a primitive race imbues its gods is intended to overawe the devotee. The ugliness of such a god is an accredited attribute, and its whole point is that it forms the greatest possible contrast to other objects which the rude artists endeavour to make beautiful. Even an artistic nation like the Japanese has its ugly deities. But representations of them are but illustrations of mythology undertaken with a reverence for tradition.

In Europe also there have been painters in the early days who have given licence to their fancy in devising dragons and devils; but such things always appeared as a foil to celestial creatures whom the painters made as beautiful as they could. It was not their fault that they often succeeded better with the ugly thing than with the beautiful one. It requires neither talent nor skill to create ugliness, and it is more than possible that if the painters of our day who achieve such triumphs in disgusting ugliness were sufficiently gifted to paint admirable things they would do so.

In classical art the quest of the beautiful was unsullied even by exceptional motives. There the instinct for balance and grace of proportion was strong enough to resist all other impulses. Even the "Medusa" was a beautiful horror.

Naturalism, so strong in the Gothic mind, produced work that was often coarse; but it never departed from the normal except in the way of humour, nor was it repellent to the taste of the age. Even now the inventions of "Hell" Brueghel do not really shock us.

It is to-day, at the furthest point of education and advancement that a cult of the ugly is to be found, and its field is not the *matter* of art only, but the *manner* also—a distinction that could not be made in the earlier work.

All these abuses accost the eye of a visitor in many an exhibition gallery; and they all have this in common: they make a distinct attempt *not* to be natural. For the painters of these things, Manet, Monet, the Barbizon artists, and everybody else who has striven for the poetry of truth, need never have existed. The greater public of course finds such things tedious and silly, and,

not unnaturally, sneers at the whole business of art in consequence.

There is no mystery as to what gives rise to these vagaries. The cause is only too palpably a dread of obscurity on the part of the painters. When a soldier drops out of the line of march, even if he drops out to die, he is, for the moment at least, a point of interest in the whole squadron. Similarly the painter likely to be lost sight of in the ranks, differentiates himself by some distinguishing sign in his work, so that he may not escape notice.

Too many of these signals of distress, as they undoubtedly are, come near to belying art and dragging it in the mud. They are obviously not artistic and sincere, for were they so they would fail in their object by not attracting attention. Many of them are for this reason therefore not only extremely inartistic, but inexpressibly ugly also.

Unworthy as are the motives giving rise to this state of things, some may yet be disposed to sit not too severely in judgment considering how great is the supply and how small the demand in art to-day. Unfortunately the business does not end here. The further fact is that the keen-eyed adventurer observes these works, and quite reasonably supposes that any initiation or training is absolutely unnecessary for their manufacture. He therefore sets about doing the same kind of thing, only he goes to still further lengths of stupidity and ugliness. The exploiter who is for ever in waiting, joins forces with him, and advertisement does all that remains to be done. Thus the curious

products whose sole claim to art lies in the canvas and paint used in their production, come into the art world with newly-coined names to beguile the ignorant and vain Croesus who is the quarry. Those names need not be repeated here. They are quite well enough known. Indeed the whole despicable business calls for no further remark in a book dealing with art, and is best tabooed at all times.

It is an astounding thing that, with one or two exceptions, no critics can be found who will frankly and fearlessly set their faces against this shameless rubbish. Were the press, to a man, to ignore it and to preach healthy art instead of slushy abstractions which pass for modernism, there would be countless painters, now weak enough to follow an advertised fashion, who would be glad to remain loyal to accepted principles. Had art-criticism moral fibre enough to do this it might help art along and preserve for it that robustness and sincerity which alone can win public approval.

These critics lose sight of the fact that it is the function of art to give pleasure, and to deal with the beautiful. It has nothing to do with the mere queerness of points of view and conditions of vision and states of mind. If an artist is not prompted by the charms of form, tone, and colour which a theme displays, he should let it alone. At the same time he may be excused for taking in hand subject-matter that is in itself depressing, if he presents it as a medium for æsthetic qualities.

It is no uncommon thing to find intelligent but uncritical people endeavouring to reconcile the pernicious

exercises with a theory of an inevitable general change which, they surmise, is in the air and must affect all kinds of art. They point to modern music and draw an analogy from modern composers like Scriabin and Schoenberg whom they aver are in the position of the modern irresponsibles in painting. These advocates honestly believe that because the latest composers are evidently winning ground the latest painters must win ground also. The analogy would be perfectly sound if the conditions in each case were similar; which they are not.

After writing the remarks upon a foregoing page relative to the necessity of development in painting, I met with two articles¹ by the eminent musical critics E. A. Baughan and M. D. Calvocoressi respectively, dealing with this very question of modern music. I refer to them here as confirming what I advance as to the great difference between modern effort in music and the practices of the extremists in painting. Mr. Baughan says:—

“We must focus this new music, however. We must try to see it in proper perspective and in its true relation to art. We are helped to some extent by our knowledge that both Scriabin and Schönberg (the latter especially) are composers who have shown in other work that they are masters of their craft. That is their plea of justification. Neither is a mere bungler. Nor are their experiments in harmony and (let me be antithetical!) in organic formlessness the isolated phenomena some critics would have us believe. I need hardly point out to readers of the *Musical Times* that the history of the development of music is a history

¹ *The Musical Times*, April, 1914.

of experiments. These experiments are, in a sense recurrent. What Monteverde tried to do in his period, these modern men are doing now in theirs. Gluck led to Wagner (not musically, but artistically); Couperin and Rameau produced the Liszt symphonic-poems, and from them and Wagner sprang Richard Strauss; Debussy and Ravel are the forerunners of Schönberg and Scriabin; and on all these composers, from Liszt and Wagner to the present day, the genius of Chopin has had great influence."

He goes on to trace the consecutive advancements of musical form from the sonata to the "Prometheus" of Scriabin and the "Five Orchestral Pieces" of Schoenberg. It would be positively impossible to show any such developments or connecting links with art of the past in the case of the extremists in painting to-day; for they have not grown in, nor even outgrown, art traditions. They have simply struck in from outside, with practices that are foreign to art. Mr. Calvocoressi's article includes quotations from the writings of Schoenberg himself which endorse in an astonishing way Mr. Baughan's views upon the new music:—

" 'One of the loftiest duties of teaching,' says Schönberg, 'is to awaken the true understanding of the past, and at the same time to open a field of view upon the future. Tuition, therefore, should be historical, so as to establish the connection between that which has been, that which is, and that which—according to likelihood—will come to be.'

"That axiom brings us forthwith to the crucial point. It is absolutely, and always will be absolutely true, that no art-form, no art-style, possessing vitality can spring out of nothingness, nor even be actually antagon-

istic to what has been. However strange and abnormal they may seem to be, they must be tested with reference to tradition."

Again he quotes the words of Schoenberg:—

"Too much stress has been laid upon the fact that Mahler's influence has been and still is strong on me. That it is true I do not deny. But I have been influenced by all the great classical masters, not by Mahler alone. What I know I have learned through studying the music of Bach, of Mozart, of Beethoven, of Wagner, and of Brahms."

Compare such admissions with the manifestoes of our latter-day painters!

It must be evident from such testimony that any supposed analogy between modern newness in music and modern newness in painting does not exist. Therefore those uncritical persons who try to think that the so-called pictures which shock and repel the ordinary picture-lover are on the same plane as the music which employs new scales and teems with what we now call discords, are confusing what is legitimate though perhaps disturbing progress in one art, with lawless mockery in another. These good people do not perceive that their easy-going uncritical agnosticism, their *laissez faire*, opens the door very wide indeed to the kind of performance which cannot survive honest criticism. It is upon the strength of such an argument as theirs, namely, that all great artists who have had something new to say have in their day been considered either immoral or mad, that the immoral and mad ones march in, making great claims of having something new to say.

So much for the greater public who know little and

care less. There is a smaller and more sophisticated section, made up of dealers, writers, and, of course, the painters concerned, who constitute themselves advocates of these decadent modes. They take their stand upon the dicta of these particular painters, who affirm that the usual forms of art no longer serve as expressions of modern ideas, and that therefore a new kind of art is required. The argument is obviously fallacious, for it is evident that as ideas change and develop they will change and develop their means of expression. The hypothesis of certain ideas existing with no language to express them in is untenable. And more untenable still is the belief that a new language could be invented at a moment's notice so to speak, and having no connection with what now exists, which could nevertheless convey ideas better than could art as manifested at present. Every new idea has its roots in the old ones, and in the same way, everything that is new in art must grow from a previous stage.

Art has always been a developing organism. To cut it down is impossible; whilst to attempt the manufacture of a new and strange activity which shall have no connection with the past is like planting a culled blossom. Without roots and a soil which will yield sustenance no organism can thrive. And even if it were possible to implant a new art in our present life, it could never flourish if it were denied the sunshine of the people's understanding and delight.

To-morrow's advancements in science will result from the operations of science to-day: new phases of art can just as little come into being spontaneously. Art has gone through a long system of evolution. As life becomes actuated by new forces, new requirements

of art will surely be forthcoming; but its principles cannot change. Men must always have an art founded on nature as they see it, however much evolution may alter their outlook; and an art that reflects nothing of the beauty and truth of nature is powerless and will be thrown aside.

Since art, from the reliefs of Ancient Egypt to the latest impressions, has been one unbroken line of development, why should we despair of future legitimate developments? Why think that we have come to a moment when development fails us, and that we must, in consequence, discard what has accompanied us through the ages and invent something fresh?

As a matter of fact, painting does develop in a legitimate way. It is quite a patent fact that all creative art tends towards the spiritual from the material: to the mental from the physical. Painting undertakes less and less obligation to render form and structure severely. Music is no longer elaborated upon the structural forms that were once held indispensable. Even architecture allows the analogy a further step, for the method of laying stones upon stones, hallowed by antiquity, is now giving place to the method known as reinforced concrete which dispenses with stones altogether, and will, in time, give rise to a new and undreamt-of style in building, wherein the static is almost lost in the dynamic.

In an age that sees men flying in the air—and flying upside down—it would be unreasonable to expect to find them painting with the technique and execution, the ideals and points of view of the Van Eycks.

The culmination of all the madness coming adven-

titiously into pictures is seen in the attempt to foist upon a languid art world something that claims to anticipate the future. The future no one can know; but it is reasonable to suppose that whatever it is, it certainly will not be the result of anything sporadic or interjected to-day into the steady flow of the current of development. Methods that come from nowhere will end nowhere.

We are told that all new movements have been met with opposition from conservative spirits who can see no good in anything but what has gone by. Advocates of modern madnesses in painting point to certain artists in the past who were misunderstood in their day, and argue upon the analogy that the new things which shock to-day will be highly appraised in the future.

The argument assumes that there is a similarity between the latter-day adventurers and the pioneers of the past. That assumption is gratuitous. There is nothing whatever in the works of the former to indicate that they are carrying art one step further; yet this is what all the old pioneers could show. The most denied of them all had their few champions among thinking and cultivated men in art. Who are the champions of the modern revolutionists?—a few journalists and dealers only! Those of the past had to wait but a little while before they began to gather supporters slowly but surely. The time may have seemed long but it ran out at last into recognition and acclamation. Our present revolutionaries have won no supporters at all amongst painters. Their popularity has been a thing of newspaper “booming.” It has had no real

life because people have been able to see nothing in it. Works which, upon patient examination yield more and more conviction, are those which possess true and good principles.

It is ridiculous to suppose that men who have made a life-long study of painting; who have lived always in the atmosphere of art and are alive and keen to every sign of new life, can be so much surpassed in perspicuity by a few untrained men as to miss in their works any sign of true life and progress if such is there to be seen. It is likewise ridiculous to suppose that childish and hideous performances can possess truths and beauties which the foremost artists cannot see, but which two or three dealers and newspaper critics can recognise by intuition or revelation.

The argument that these works have been done by men who feel and see something to which experts and experienced artists are blind will not hold for a moment; and the implication that this something will nevertheless be apparent in the future is, on the face of it, equally futile.

The real art of the future may be new in its methods; but it will, as always, be an expression of the passions and emotions of man; of his delight in life and the universe; his delight in the beautiful. It will be something that reflects his work and his play; his love and his destiny. A thing of cliques and coteries it can never be; nor a thing of hidden meaning, of constant riddle and puzzle and shock, belying man's experience and scandalising his intelligence. Were it to prove such a thing, over his head and afar from his heart, man would turn his back upon it irrevocably. Nothing but man's untroubled joy in art can keep art alive.

After all, we know that the claims made upon the future by the revolutionaries in art are not seriously urged. The claims are in reality upon the present; but the future supplies a convenient catchward for something out of the common. The revolutionaries make a mistake in supposing that their vagaries are in harmony with the general trend of thought in life and art. If they were they would not be out of the common run of things. The changes that are observable to-day are due to science alone, and art can but faintly reflect them. They are but evidences of the state into which the mind of man has wrought itself by virtue of a complex civilisation. Simple and early modes it no longer regards; and it has left behind the outward consideration of things in the quest for the inner, or perhaps I should say the "super." Men are losing the pleasurable sensations that enter by the eye: they take sensations in through the pores. Every nerve-end in their bodies is beginning to respond to the new kinds of pleasure—speed, flicker, variety in rapid changes, and various kinds of mental thrill, such as force and shock. To all these Science is the handmaid.

But art is not science, and to-day we are in the presence of the greatest proof of that fact. Art gains nothing from all this development in life. It is to be questioned whether, in fact, it is not a loser by it. There is reason to believe that the painting of pictures will cease to be encouraged unless men, in their scientific development and all that it means in the luxury and complication of life, begin at length to miss the quiet joys of art, and yearn for them again as a set-off to the whirl and wear of a highly organised existence. Certainly it appears that men are able to live healthy,

pleasurable and useful lives without a single aspiration towards fine art of any sort. But Time may disprove this. Artists may be comforted in the reflection that this phase has come to the human mind before in the world's history. It is a wave that will pass, and men will begin again at the simple end of things. It is but the swing to and fro through the ages. At present the movement must go on. Nobody can stem it. As far as art is concerned, the earth is as material as ever it was. Nature is steadfast. Art has still the everlasting hills, and the great oceans. Some day men will awake again to the beauty of material things, and the calm satisfaction that rests with things that are slow and solid and simple. They will then find that Nature and the eternal principles of her beauty are as they ever were. They have not developed. Animals and plants, and the winds and the rains are still the same. The heavenly bodies are constant; the sky and its rainbows are to-day what they were to the heroes of the Pentateuch. Man alone changes, in his eager, nervous outlook, actuated by the leaps of science. Art is unchanging because it is founded upon æsthetic principles, and those are rocks not waves.

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